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THE GREEK AND ROMAN UNDERSTANDING OF ANCIENT INDIA

Dr. James Puliurumpil

THE ORGANISED SYSTEM OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FROM 4TH TO 6TH CENTURIES

Dr. John Moolan

EUCHARIST - A MYSTERY WHERE GOD TOUCH US DIRECTLY

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BOOK REVIEW

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Editorial

The earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another is a fact open only to the eyes of faith; moreover, it will remain the mystery of human history (*Gaudium et Spes* IV. 41). The Catholic Church is very clear of the fact that this world is God's own. God makes use of this world for the sake of man, for his salvation. God prepared the world in a way that it should receive His Son Jesus Christ. St. Paul is of the same opinion that when he writes to the Galatians that Christ appeared in the world in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). The world during the birth of Christ was a threefold world: Roman, Greek and Jewish. Roman was the political, Greek the cultural and Jewish the religious world of that time. Though India was outside this threefold world, it formed part of the ancient world system centering Mediterranean. India that time was well known to the Greek and Roman writers. The pre-Christian European writers, therefore, helped the Indian mission of St. Thomas, by making known to the then world the different countries of the world especially India. This well known part of the world was made use of by St. Thomas to preach the Gospel of his Master and thus planted Christianity in this known, great, wealthy land and gave rise to an early Christian community or Church called 'the St. Thomas Christians'. Thus the 'Christian Orient' has its beginning already in the middle of the first

century. The first article deals with the understanding of India of the various early pre-Christian writers.

The Christian Initiation rites during the 4th – 6th centuries in different places is given in the second article. The initiation rite is performed differently in different places with different interpretations. The common features are rather the same. The East Syrian, viz., Chaldean, Syro-Malabar and Assyrian, rites during this period followed the most ancient apostolic tradition of the order of initiation as chrismation-baptism with Eucharist as the right of the baptized. It is in the 7th century that the patriarch Iso-yahb III (647-657) who introduced first the infant initiation with Baptism-Chrismation-Eucharist in accordance with the order of baptism of Jesus in Jordan. The sources concerning the same are very clearly given in this article. The general structure and theology is narrated in the second part of the article. The administration of the sacraments of initiation during the fourth to sixth centuries manifests the earnestness of the church to make her members serious in following Christ. Theological significance of the mysteries of Christ celebrated during the initiation rite prompt them to remain united with Christ throughout life. Baptismal purification, charismatic strengthening and Eucharistic

nourishment are the perennial needs to be renewed and revived in daily Christian life.

The Holy Qurbana or the Eucharist is situated in the context of the Mystery – the Trinitarian mystery of God, which expresses a process of action wherein all the three persons are in reciprocal self-emptying and self donating love. Being the result of the Trinitarian mystery's self-emptying and self-donation, the mystery of the Holy Qurbana escapes all human comprehensibility. It can only be experienced and lived. In the third article the author shows that Eucharist is a mystery where God touches us directly so that we can experience it and live it. Religious

symbols enable us to enter the depth of ourselves in our search of what is Ultimate. They have the power of transforming our minds and hearts and elevating them towards God. The human beings can touch or experience the mysteries through symbols, signs and imageries. That is why in Eastern tradition sacraments are called Sacred Mysteries. In early centuries Eucharist was called 'Sacrament of sacraments'. All the other sacraments lead towards and flow from the Eucharist. The author in the article makes it clear that the Eucharist is the Ursakrament or the Grundsakrament. Thus Eucharist stands as the source of life and summit of creation.



The Greek and Roman understanding of ancient India

James Puliurumpil

Introduction

India has a great ancient past. Ancient India was well known to many countries of that time. As she was known to them India was often referred to by most of the famous ancient writers in their writings. But as they have not been to this land some of them have confused ideas regarding the frontiers and vastness of this land. Sometimes they have confused India with other countries like Persia, Ethiopia, Arabia, Egypt etc. Many of these writers have to depend upon the occasional traders and travelers for their account of this land, like St. Gregory on Theophilus and St. Ambrose on Museus. For example, the description of St. Jerome regarding the visit of Pantenus to India was misinterpreted by some readers and even writers, telling that the India mentioned by Jerome was not India Proper but some other country like Arabia or Parthia. India was the farthest land to the Greeks and the Romans. Its vastness too was another reason for their confusion. It was considered a credit to them to write about this great nation, regarding its peoples, customs, religions and its wealth. The western writers who deny the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas say that India that time had a wider significance. But a later study of the details and the whereabouts of this land makes one

understand that it was really the proper India meant by the ancient writers of the western world. All these are problems due to the fact that the Indians have not kept any written record of its antiquity. Indians, who found time and energy for studying and speculating on Philosophy, Poetry, Yoga and Science, were least interested in the Maya or the transitory world. The events, which form the history, are unimportant for the Indian minds. For example, when the Macedonian invasion of India has kept no record in the vast Sanskrit literature, the Greek literature has kept a lot of information regarding the socio-political, racial and religious situation of the then India. We have, therefore, to depend upon the western historians to study this great event. The existence of a long line of Graeco-Parthian rulers, some of whom extended their rule far into northern India is a fact that remained unknown until brought light by modern scholarship. But we get glimpses of the Indian past from her sculpture, paintings, coins, inscriptions and monuments, a study of which, though a strenuous one, helps in our further research.

1. The Greek understanding of India

The Greek writers of the pre-Christian period knew well India and its boundaries.

They knew also the different animals, plants and the special items like pearls etc of that great land. But their idea of the people of India and their social customs, practices, beliefs etc were not known to them.

1. 1. India, according to the pre-Christian Greek writers

Before the Indian invasion of Alexander, India was a mere land of fables to the Greeks. Since no one knew anything definite of this land, the ancient writers called this land *terra ignota* (a land, about which no clear idea). Long before Alexander's invasion of India, Skylax of Karyanda, made a voyage in 517 B.C. down to the Indus and from there to the head of the Red Sea near the modern Suez. But Skylax left us no idea of this voyage which he made by the order of the then emperor Darius. Haekataeus of Miletus who wrote a book on India that time, makes mention of this voyage and he then makes references to certain Indian names such as Indus, Indi etc.¹ Herodotus wrote a book on India about 430 B.C. But his knowledge of India was not much. For him 'India is the

farthest part of the inhabited world towards the east.² Around 400 B.C. Ktesias wrote 'Indika'³ containing a lot of wonderful stories about India. This book too did not give clear information of this great and extensive land. Therefore it was Alexander, who with his invasion of India, gave the west almost a clear idea of this vast and distant land.

1. 2. Alexander's account of India

Alexander's information on India refers to both North and South India. Regarding Sri Lanka, an island which lies near to India and which is counted part of India by many ancient authors, Alexander's account gives the following description:

Taprobane has a magnitude of 5000 stadia without distinction of length or breadth; that it is different from the mainland a voyage of twenty days, but that the vessels employed for the voyage sail badly owing to the wretched quality of their sails and to the peculiarity of their structure; that other islands lie between it and India, but that Taprobane lies farthest to the south; that there are found around its shores cetaceous animals which are

¹ H.G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World From the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge 1926) 19.

² Herodotus 3. 106, as quoted in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 4. The Greek writer Herodotus is known as the 'father of history'. His famous book 'History of the Wars', written 430 B.C., is a description of the wars between the Persian empire and the Greek city states. In this book chapter 3, paragraphs 98 till 106 speak about India as the farthest land on earth, about the people, their lifestyle, gold available there etc. Other references on India in the same book we find in 4.40, 4.44, 7.65, 7.86, 187 and in 8.113.

³ Ktesias (Ktesias) is a Greek physician and a historian from Cnidus, who lived in the fifth century B.C. He had an account of India titled 'Indika' which is a record of the beliefs of the Persians about India. This book speaks about the peoples, philosophers, artisans, gold and other riches and wonders in India. This book remains only in fragments in the original form.

amphibious and in appearance like oxen, horses, and other land animals. Its elephants are larger and more bellicose than those of India.⁴

1. 2.1. Indian invasion of Alexander

In 326 B.C. Alexander the king of Macedonia, with his army crossed Indus, the eastern boundary of the Persian Empire and entered India. After having defeated a number of petty kings of the neighbouring localities Alexander fought against the army of the king Poros. In this war Poros was defeated and taken captive. At his own request Alexander gave him freedom and he was appointed to govern his own Indians. Alexander was very good to him by giving him a more extensive territory than the original one. As Alexander treated Poros as a king of great ability Poros remained faithful and devoted to Alexander.⁵

Alexander's troop had in mind the idea of the conquest of the great land of India with all its mythical exploits of Dionysos, Heracles and Semiramis.⁶ But the army reaching the Beas (Hyphasis) river were frightened at the thought of new terrors and

privations and thus decided to go back content with the conquest of Punjab region. After having appointed Poros to act as his viceroy with the title of satrap Alexander was thus forced to retire along the same route. Poros was entrusted with '15 tribes, 5000 cities and villages without number'.⁷ Alexander then made all preparations to take with him all the army and the possible things they seized during their endeavour. He seized and purchased the ships of the Indian and Persian traders on the Indus. Many ships he built himself. Thus he assembled a fleet of 2000 ships of all sizes.⁸ After having made all the preparations Alexander sent Nearchos, his admiral, down the river Indus, with a strong force that marched along the banks. Thus he conquered and subjugated all the kingdoms of the Indus valley. Then he sent Nearchos and his fleet to explore the coasts of Gedrosia and Karmania up to the mouths of Euphrates and Tigris. At the same time Alexander with his own army marched through the deserts of Gedrosia and Karmaina. He arrived at Susa, a city of Persia in 324 B.C. Nearchos too with his men reached Susa after having made a great victory.

⁴ Pliny, *Natural History* 6. 22. Ancient writers like Pliny, Ptolemy and Strabo write about Sri Lanka. Other earlier writings on Sri Lanka were lost. But they were referred to in the writings of Ptolemy, Pliny and Strabo. This land is called differently by different writers. Pliny calls it Antichthonos, Periplus calls it Palai-simoundou, Ptolemy calls it Salike. Its other names are Taprobane, Serendivus, Sirelediba, Serendib, Seilan, Sailan, Ceylon etc. In Ramayanas it is called Lanka. A.C. Perumalil, *Apostles in India* (Patna 1971) 10.

⁵ Arian, *Anabasis* 5.9, as quoted in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India and its Invasion by Alexander the Great* (Westminster 1893) 109.

⁶ Strabo 15.1.

⁷ Plu arch, *Life of Alexander*, p. 60 as quoted in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India and its Invasion by Alexander the Great* (Westminster 1893) 350.

⁸ Arian, *Anabasis* 6.2

But these victories did not last long as Alexander died the next year, i.e. in 323 B.C.⁹

Though Alexander was not successful in conquering Indian territories, he could bring India into close contacts with the Greeks. He had broken the great barrier, the Persian empire, which separated and prevented the Greeks from having direct communications with India and her people.¹⁰ His achievements and the descriptions of the people and lands of those times were chronicled by eminent men of letters whom Alexander brought with him. They were the following: Ptolemy who later became the king of Egypt, Aristobulus of Potidea, Nearchus the admiral of Alexander, Onesikritos the pilot of the fleet, Eumenes of Kardia Alexander's secretary, Chares of Mitylene, Kallisthenes Aristotle's kinsman, Kleitharcus son of Deidon, Polykletus of Larissa, Anaximenes of Lampsakus, Diogenetes and Baeton the measurers of Alexander's marches, Kyrillus of Pharsalus and a few others.¹¹ These writers gave the western world a well informative and detailed description of India, about her people and her physical features. This was really the great achievement of Alexander than his conquering India.

1. 3. Drawbacks of their narrations

The eminent men in the fleet of Alexander who gave a good deal of ideas regarding India were not well informed of

many of the things in this extensive land of India. They jotted down what they perceived and experienced. Many of them were not full truth, but nearer to the truth. But their accounts were better than those of the previous writers like Herodotus and Ktesias. Onesikritos, the pilot of the fleet of Alexander, for instance, regarded India as 'one third of the habitable world' and according to Nearchos, the admiral of Alexander, 'to traverse the plains only, there needs a journey of four months'.¹² For Aristoboulos, India resembles in many respects with Ethiopia and Egypt and also it differs from them in many other respects. For example, Nile is flooded with the rains of the south and the Indian rivers are flooded from the north. In both countries intermediate places have no rain; for rain does not fall in the Thebais as far as Syene and the places near Meroe, nor in the parts of India between Patalene and the Hydaspes. But they are cultivated in the same way as they were supplied with moisture by the rains and snows. Regarding the cultivation of rice Aristoboulos writes: Rice stands in water and is sown in beds. The plant is four cubits in height, has many ears, and yields a large produce. The time of its ingathering is about the setting of the Pleiades, and it is husked in the same way as barley. Aristoboulos writes a lot regarding India. According to him India, like Arabia and Ethiopia, produces cinnamon, spikenard and other aromatics.

⁹ See the details in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India and its Invasion by Alexander the Great* (Westminster 1893) 131.

¹⁰ See A.C. Perumalil, *Apostles in India* (Patna 1971) 6-7.

¹¹ J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) xiv.

¹² J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 18.

1. 4. Knowledge of India after the death of Alexander in 323 B.C.

With the death of Alexander in Babylon in 323 B.C. his vast empire was divided among his generals. The Greek power in the Punjab and north western India did not last long. Chandragupta Maurya liberated Punjab from the Greek domination. Seleukos Nikator who got a part of the Macedonian kingdom carried on many wars in the East. After having conquered Babylonia he passed into India. As he found a victory against Chandragupta not easy the wise Seleukos came to terms with the Indian king and gave some part of Ariane (Persia) to Sandrokotso (Chandragupta) in concluding a marriage alliance and received in exchange 500 elephants.¹³ Owing to these friendly relations between the Greek and Indian kings, many Greeks, especially merchants were attracted to the royal city of Pataliputra (Patna). Chandragupta's government made all arrangements to receive and entertain foreign traders who came to the capital. Strabo gives the following account regarding the same: He had appointed officers to entertain strangers, assign them lodgings, observe their mode of life by means of the attendants whom they attach to them, and escort them out of the country, or if they die, send home their property, take care of them in sickness, and when they die, bury them.¹⁴

In order to strengthen the relationship Seleukos, king of Syria in 302 B.C. sent

Megasthenes, of the satrap of Arachosia, as ambassador to Chandragupta. While he was in India he wrote the book called 'Indica' which is a history of the Indian affairs of that time.

Megasthenes defines the boundaries of India in the following words: India, which is in shape quadrilateral, has its eastern as well as its western side bounded by the great sea, but on the northern side it is divided by Mount Hemodos from that part of Skythia which is inhabited by those Skythians who are called the Sakai, while the fourth or western side is bounded by the river called the Indus, which is perhaps the largest of all rivers in the world after the Nile.¹⁵ Eratosthenes describes India as:

India is bounded on the north from Ariana to the eastern sea by the extremities of the Tauros which the Macedonians call the Kaukasos, while the natives give distinctive names to the several parts, such as Paropamisos, Emodos, and Imaos, and others besides; on the west it is bounded by the river Indus; the southern and eastern sides are much greater than the others and project into the Atlantic Ocean, and the country becomes of the shape of a rhomboid, each of the greater sides exceeding the opposite by 3000 stadia; and this is the extent of the extremity common to the eastern and southern coast which projects equally on both sides beyond the rest of the coast.¹⁶

¹³ Strabo. 15.2.9

¹⁴ Strabo 15.1.36.

¹⁵ J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, (Calcutta 1887) 30.

¹⁶ Strabo 15.1. 11.

It is very interesting to note that at the time when Eratosthenes was writing, the name of the Atlantic was applied to the whole body of water by which the world was surrounded.¹⁷ Arrian, quoting both these writers (Megasthenes and Eratosthenes), writes about India: They also say that India is bounded towards the east and the east wind as far as the south by the Great sea, and towards the north by Mount Kaukasos, as far as its junction with the Tauros, while the river Indus cuts it off from other countries towards the west and the north-west wind as far as the Great Sea.¹⁸

Again during the time of Bindusara, the son and successor of Chandragupta, Demeichos was sent to India by Antiochus Soter, the successor of Seleukos. He too had left for the posterity a faithful account of all what he had witnessed in India. Not only the Syrian kings but also the Egyptian kings (Ptolemy) fostered relationships with India. Pliny in *Natural History* writes about the Egyptian Ptolemy Philadelphus sending an ambassador called Dionysius to Pataliputra 'to put the truth to the test by personal inspection'.¹⁹ He too wrote a book on India. Eratosthenes, the learned president of the Alexandrian library from 240-196 B.C. wrote a book on India based on the information

received from Patrokles who was in command of the eastern province of the Syrian empire.²⁰ India not only received ambassadors from the Greek, Syrian and Egyptian rulers, but also sent Indian Buddhist missionaries to preach in their lands. The writings of the Greek authors furnished the western world with a fair knowledge of the geography of India, her people and their customs.

Arrian writes about the physical condition of India as follows: The larger portion is a plain, and this, as they conjecture, has been formed from the alluvial deposits of the rivers, just as in other countries plains which are not far off from the sea are generally formations of their respective rivers, a fact which explains why the names of such countries were applied of old to their rivers.²¹

Strabo writes about the rivers: The whole of India is watered by rivers, some of which unite with the two greatest, the Indus and the Ganges, while others enter the sea through mouths of their own. They all have their sources in the Kaukasos. At first they flow southward, but while some continue their course in this direction – those especially which fall into the Indus – others are diverted like the Ganges towards the east. This river, which is the largest in India, descends from the

¹⁷ A.C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India* (Patna 1971) 18.

¹⁸ Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.5, in J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 88.

¹⁹ Pliny, *Natural History* 6.17

²⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.17, Details of the same in H.G. Rawlinson, H.G., *Intercourse Between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge 1926,) 93.

²¹ Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.5, in J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 89.

mountainous country and turns eastward upon its reaching the plains. Then flowing past Palibothra (Patna), a very large city, it pursues its way to the sea in that quarter and discharges into it by a single mouth. The Indus falls into the southern sea by two mouths, encompassing the country called Patalene, which resembles the Delta in Egypt.²²

Strabo, quoting Eratosthenes, writes about the rainfall and crops of India:

By the vapours which ascend from so many rivers, and by the Etesian winds, India is watered by the summer rains and the level country is inundated. During the rainy season flax and millet, as well as seasamum, rice and bosmoron are sown; and in the winter season wheat, barley, pulse and other esculants with which we are unacquainted.²³

Then he writes also about the animals as: Nearly the same animals are bred in India as in Ethiopia and Egypt, and the Indian rivers produce all the animals found in the rivers of these countries except the hippopotamus. (Strabo 15.1.13).

The Greek writers distinguish clearly between Indians, Ethiopians and Egyptians. According to them:

The men of the south resemble the Ethiopians in their complexion, but in their face and in their hair they are like other people; for their hair does not curl on account of the

moistness of the atmosphere. The men of the north again are like the Egyptians. They cover their persons down to the feet with fine muslin, are shod with sandals and coil round their heads cloths of linen. They hang precious stones as pendants from their ears, and persons of high social rank, or of great wealth, deck their wrist and upper arm with bracelets of gold. They frequently comb, but seldom cut, the hair of their head. The beard of the chin they never cut at all, but they shave off the hair from the rest of the face, so that it looks polished. The luxury of their kings, or as they call it, their magnificence is carried to a vicious excess without parallel in the world.²⁴

1.6. Greek understanding of South India

There are clear indications to show that the Greeks knew South India as well. This is evident from many passages of their accounts. It is very clear in the following account: They say that Taprobane is an island lying out in the sea, distant from most southern parts of India which are next to the country of the Koniakoi, a seven days voyage to southward, and extending about 8000 stadia in the direction of Ethiopia. It too produces elephants.²⁵ Pomponius Mela calls the southern portion of India which projects into the sea by the name of Kolis. Kolis is derived from the Sanskrit 'Koti' meaning end or tip.

²² Strabo 15.1. 13. Ptolemy writing in 150 A.D. assigns five mouths to the Ganges and seven mouths to the Indus.

²³ Strabo 15. 1. 13

²⁴ J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India and its Invasion by Alexander the Great* (Westminster 1893) 188.

²⁵ Strabo. 15. 1.14.

Megasthenes writes that it is divided by a river. This is the Mahaveli Ganga which passes through Kandy and flows into the Trincomali Gulf and that its inhabitants are called Paleogoni, and it is more productive of gold and pearls of a great size than India itself.²⁶ Eratosthenes also gives its dimensions as 7000 stadia in length and 5000 stadia in breadth and it has no cities, but villages to the number of 700. According to him:

The sea between the island and India is full of shallows not more than six paces in depth, but in some channels so deep that no anchors can find the bottom. For this reason ships are built with prows at each end to obviate the necessity of their turning about in channels of extreme narrowness. The tonnage of these vessels is 3000 amphorae. In making sea-voyages, the Taprobane mariners make no observations of the stars, and indeed the Greater Bear is not visible to them, but they take birds to out to the sea with them which they loose from time to time and follow the direction of their flight as they make for land.²⁷

2. The Roman understanding of India

2.1. Disintegration of Greek regime in India and the beginning of Roman contact with India

The powerful Mauryan empire declined with the death of Asoka in 232 B.C. Due to

the subsequent wars and invasions in North India the kingdoms of Menander, Demetrius and of many others rose and fell and passed into oblivion during the next two centuries, i.e., from the death of Asoka and the birth of Christ. During this period the Greek rule in North West India and Bactria came to an end.²⁸ Towards the close of the last century B.C. a new kingdom began to come up in this region, called the Parthian kingdom. During Antiochus II, the second successor of Seleukos, Arsakas, chief of Parthia began emerging as a powerful king. Following him the Parthian power under Arsakidan dynasty gradually extended eastwards until it occupied the parts formerly possessed by the old Achaemenian empire of Persia. Since this newly formed Parthian empire remained a barrier for the communication between the Greeks and the Indians very few Greek writers wrote on India during this period.

By this time Rome was coming up as a very powerful empire absorbing the remnants of the Greek empire of Alexander. Syria and Egypt became Roman provinces.²⁹ The *pax romana* (the Roman peace) during Augustus, who came to power in 27 B.C., is the glorious period of the Roman history. The successive conquests brought plenty of wealth to Rome and thus the people and the governors started dreaming of acquiring or buying the precious things of the East.³⁰ But the defeat of Crassus

²⁶ A.C. Perumalil, *Apostles in India* (Patna 1971), 18

²⁷ Pliny, *Natural History* 6.2, as quoted in J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 102.

²⁸ A.C. Perumalil, *Apostles in India* (Patna 1971), 19.

²⁹ See the details in H.G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World From the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge 1926) 101.

³⁰ See the details in H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Longman 1912) 5

and Antony by the Parthians limited the Roman dominion to the banks of the Euphrates. Hence all the rich trade that flowed to Rome had to pay its toll to the empire of Parthia and to the Arab kingdoms until Rome could develop and control a sea-borne trade with India. Hitherto, Egypt under the Ptolemies had not developed a sea-borne trade with India.³¹ The Egyptian ships came only as far as Arabia Eudaemon (Aden). But the Romans being checked on the land route to India were forced to open a sea route to India. It helped the Romans when the newly formed kingdom of Auxum, a neighbouring kingdom of Arabia, entered into relationship with the Romans. Thus the old trading centre of Guardafui, formerly under the Arab control, now became free. During Gallus a Roman army entered Arabia Felix. These incidents helped the Romans to set sail to India. Strabo wrote in 5 A.D, during the time of Augustus of the Roman empire: I was with Gallus at the time he was prefect of Egypt, and accompanied him as far as Syene and the frontiers of Ethiopia, and I found that about one hundred and twenty ships sail from Myos-Hormos to India.³² The author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* writes about the same as: These ships in fact did not go across the Indian ocean to India, but along the coastal waters of Arabia and Karmania to the Indus mouth, and then to Barygazha and to the ports in the southern parts of the peninsula.³³ But

the Romans who were not satisfied with this circuitous route to South India wanted to find out a direct one.

2.2. Eminent writers of this period who write about India

In ancient history we find the names of certain eminent writers who provided the Europeans with a lot of narrations on India, her people and her neighbouring countries of the Roman period. Pliny is one among them. His famous book *Natural History* contains elaborate descriptions of her peoples, animals, plants and minerals.³⁴ Another important writer of this time is Ptolemy, whose famous work is titled as *Geography*. He describes the locations of 27 river mouths, 40 coastal towns, 199 inland cities, 8 royal cities, 6 metropolises, 13 market-towns and emporiums, 7 mountain ranges and 24 rivers. Another important author of this time is Strabo, who is known after his book *The Geography*. Others in the list are Arrian (whose book is called *Indika*) Aelian, Joannes Stobaios, Phorphyrios, Megasthenes, Eratosthenes, Dion Chrysostom, Deimachos and Dionysius.³⁵ Another important book of that time is *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, whose author is unknown.

Pliny gives in clear terms the geographical position of India in the following words:

³¹ J.W. McDrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 98

³² Strabo 2.5.12. Myos-Hormos was at the head of the Red Sea.

³³ *Periplus* 57. See also H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Longman 1912) 45.

³⁴ Pliny, *Natural History* book 6 is on the people, book 8 on the animals, book 12 on the plants and book 31 on the minerals of India.

³⁵ A.C. Perumalil, *The Apstoles in India* (Patna 1971) 35.

Where the chain of Hemodus rises the communities are settled, and the nations of India, which began there, adjoin not only the eastern sea but also the southern, which we have already mentioned under the name of the Indian Ocean. That part which faces the east runs in a straight line to the bend where the Indian Ocean begins, and measures 1875 miles. From this bend to the south up to the river Indus, which forms the western boundary of India, the distance, as given by Eratosthenes, is 22475 miles.³⁶

Arrian writes about the same as:

Now the countries which lie to the east of the Indus I take to be India proper, and the people who inhabit them to be Indians. The northern boundaries of India so defied are formed by Mount Tauros, though the range does not retain that name in these parts. ... On the west the boundaries of India are marked by the river Indus all the way to the great ocean into which it pours its waters, which it does by two mouths ... On the southwest, again and on the south, India is bounded by the great ocean just mentioned, which also forms its boundary on the east.³⁷

For most of the ancient writers River Indus is the western boundary of India. But

some writers do not consider Indus as the western boundary but River Cophes or Kabul as the furthest limit as they include four satrapies, namely Gedrosi, Arachotae, Arii and Paropamisadae, which are really part of present day Iran. By the treaty between Seleukos and Chandragupta the region of these four satrapies were added to the kingdom of Chandragupta. Hence during the Mauryan period these parts were considered belonging to India. These places in fact did not belong to India geographically but only politically and racially. That is why Arrian and Pliny correct the wrong opinions of certain previous writers by giving the exact geographical boundary of India with the river Indus as the western boundary.

Ptolemy writes about the geographical position of India as:

India within the Ganges is bounded on the west by the Paropanisadai and Arakosia and Gedrosia along their eastern sides already indicated; on the north by Mount Imaos along the Sogdieloi and the Sakai lying above it; on the east by the river Ganges; and on the south and again on the west by a portion of the Indian ocean.³⁸

³⁶ Pliny, *Natural history*, book 6, 17.

³⁷ Arrian, *Indika*, 1.2. As quoted in J.W. McCrindle., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (Calcutta 1877) 181.

³⁸ Ptolemy 7.1 as quoted in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy* (Calcutta 1885), 33. Here Ptolemy writes about the India within the Ganges. He divides India into two as India within the Ganges and India outside the Ganges. As the western boundary is here in consideration he gives here the description only of India within the Ganges. Ptolemy, in fact, has included the immediate borderland of the Indus, on its west bank, as belonging to India. One has to distinguish here between the geographical, political and racial boundaries of India. For Ptolemy and for many others even before him Indus was always considered the western geographical boundary of India.

The boundaries of India is made clear in the writings of Paul Orosius (in the beginning of the 5th century A.D.) According to him:

Asia towards the middle front of the Orient, has the mouths of the river Ganges and on the left the promontory of Caligardamna; below this towards the South East lies the Island of Taprobane, where the ocean begins to be called the Indian. On the right Asia has the Imai mountains; where the Caucasus ends it has the promontory of Samarum; below this towards the North lie the mouths of the river Octorogotta, whence the Ocean is named the Seric. On these frontiers is India having on the West the river Indus which is received by the Mare Rubrum; on the North, India has Caucasus mountain; the rest (as I said above) is bounded by the Eastern and Indian Ocean.³⁹

Cosmos writes in the 6th century on India as: Sindu, however, is the beginning of India; for the river Indus which is the Phison and which has mouths in the Persian Gulf, divides Persia from India.⁴⁰ St. Isidore of Seville writes in the 7th century on India as: India derives its name from the river Indus, by which it is enclosed on the West. It stretches out from the southern sea to the rising of the sun, and it extends on the North as far as the Caucasus

mountain. It has many nations, towns and also the Island of Taprobane which is filled with elephants. It has Chryse and Argyra which are rich in gold and silver, and also Tyle which is never wanting in foliage. It has both the rivers Ganges and Indus and Hyphasis which make the Indian famous.⁴¹

2. 3. Indian embassies to Roman Emperors

There are a lot of references to the mission of ambassadors from Indian kings to the Roman emperors. Strabo mentions an embassy sent by the Pandian king of South India to Augustus, the Roman emperor.⁴² Pliny writes about another embassy sent by the king of Ceylon to the Roman emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.) Pliny's account is as follows:

A freed man of Annius Plocamus who had farmed from the treasury the Red Sea revenues, while sailing around Arabia was carried away by gales of wind from the north beyond Karmania. In the course of fifteen days he had been wafted to Hippuri, a port of Taprobane, where he was humanly received and hospitably entertained by the king; and having in six months' time learned the language. He was able to answer the questions he was asked. The king particularly admired the Romans and their emperor as men

³⁹ Orosius, *Historia Liberorum*, 1.2 in PL 31. 675. Asia ad mediam frontem ... Indico Oceano terminator (see p. 41 of perumalil). *Mare Rubrum* is the Roman name for the Arabian Sea. The Greeks called it Erythrean Sea. The words *rubrum* and *erythra* mean 'red'.

⁴⁰ Cosmos, *Christian Topography* 12, in PG 88.448

⁴¹ Isidore, *Ethymologia Liber* 14.3.5. PL 82.497. India vocatur ... Indos (see Perumalil p. 42). For Isidore Caucasus signifies snowy mountains; for he says: Mons Caucasus ad India usque ad Taurum ... nix dicitur (*Ethymologia Liber* 14.8.2. in PL 82.521)

⁴² Strabo 15.1.4.

possessed of an unheard of love of justice, when he found that among the money taken from the captive the denarii were all of equal weight, although the different images stamped on them showed that they had been coined in the reigns of several emperors. This influenced him most of all to seek an alliance with the Romans, and he accordingly dispatched to Rome four ambassadors, of whom the chief was Rachia (Rajah).⁴³

Dion Cassius writes: And to Trajan after he had arrived in Rome there came a great many embassies from barbarian courts, and especially from the Indians, and he offered shows ... in which wild beasts without number were slaughtered, because Trajan made the deputies who came the kings to sit in the seats of the senators when viewing the show.⁴⁴ Eusebius writes in the *Life of Constantine*: Ambassadors from the Indians of the East brought presents... which they presented to the king (Constantine).⁴⁵ We find further accounts regarding the same. 'Embassies from all quarters flocked to him (the emperor Julian in 351 A.D.), the Indian nations vying with emulous zeal in sending their foremost men with presents, as far as from the Divi (Maldives) and the Serendivi (Ceylones)'. 'Even the Indians, Bactrians, Hyrcanians sent ambassadors, having had

knowledge of the justice of a prince so mighty of the Emperor Julian'.⁴⁶

2.4. A shorter route from Rome to India

Another important event happened during this time was the discovery of the monsoon winds by the Roman merchant Hippalus. Periplus of the Erythrean Sea describes it as the following: This adventurous man observed the periodic change of the Indian monsoon and boldly set sail at the proper time. He made a very successful voyage across the sea to India and returned.⁴⁷ From the time of this discovery the Roman ships began to sail straight across the sea to India. Pliny writes:

In later times it has been considered a well ascertained fact that the voyage from Syagrus, the Promontory of Arabia, to Patala, reckoned at thirteen hundred and thirty five miles, can be performed most advantageously with aid of a westerly wind, which is there known by the name of Hippalus.⁴⁸

Pliny again writes that since this route still remained long and circuitous, other attempts were again made by daring seamen until the age that followed to find out a shorter and a safer route to those who might happen to sail from the same promontory for

⁴³ Pliny 6.22.

⁴⁴ Dion Cassius, *History of Rome* 9.58, in J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 213

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.50, in PG 20.1200

⁴⁶ J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature* (Westminster 1901) 213.

⁴⁷ Periplus 57, as quoted in H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Longman 1912) 45.

⁴⁸ Pliny 6.23.

Sigerus⁴⁹, a port in India; and for a long time this route was followed until at last a still shorter cut was discovered by a merchant; and the thirst for gain brought India even still nearer to us. At the present day voyages are made to India every year.⁵⁰

Pliny describes this route from Alexandria to India. According to him one who starts from Alexandria passing through Juliopolis and Coptos reaches first in Berenice. See the details as follows:

Two miles distant from Alexandria is the town of Juliopolis. The distance thence to Coptos, up to the Nile, is three hundred and eight miles; the voyage is performed, when the Etesian winds are blowing, in twelve days. From Coptos the journey is made with the aid of camels, stations being arranged at intervals for the supply of fresh water. The first of these stations is Hydreuma (watering place), and is distant twenty two miles; the second is situated on a mountain, at a distance of one day's journey from the last; the third is at a second Hydreuma distant from Coptos ninety five miles: the fourth is on a mountain; the next to that is another Hydreuma, that of Apollo, and is distant from Coptos one hundred and eighty four miles; after which, there is another on a mountain. There is then another station at a place called the New Hydreuma, distant from Coptos two hundred and thirty miles; and next to it there is another, called the old Hydreuma, or the Troglodytic, where a detachment is always on guard, with a

caravansary that affords lodging for two thousand persons. This last is distant from the New Hydreuma seven miles. After leaving it we come to the city of Berenice, situated upon a harbour of the Red Sea and distant from Coptos two hundred and fifty seven miles. The greater part of this distance is generally traveled by night, on account of the extreme heat, the day being spent at the stations; in consequence of which it takes twelve days to perform the whole journey from Coptos to Berenice⁵¹

He then describes the route from Berenice to Muziris, the important city in India as:

Passengers generally set sail at midsummer before the rising of the Dog-star or else immediately after, and in about thirty days arrive at Ocelis in Arabia, or else at Cana, in the region which bears frankincense. There is also a third port of Arabia, Muza by name; it is not, however, used by persons on their passage to India, as only those touch at it who deal in incense and the perfumes of Arabia. ... To those who are bound for India, Ocelis is the best place for embarkation. If the wind, called Hippalus, happens to be blowing it is possible to arrive, in forty days at the nearest mart in India, Muziris by name. This, however, is not a very desirable place for disembarkation, on account of the pirates which frequent its vicinity, where they occupy a place called Nitrias, nor in fact, is very rich in articles of merchandise. Besides, the road-

⁴⁹ Periplus calls Sigerus as Meli-zeigara and Ptolemy calls it as Mili-Zegyris, is somewhere near Bombay).

⁵⁰ Pliny 6.23.

⁵¹ Pliny 6.23, as quoted in H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (Longman 1912) 232-233

stead for shopping is a considerable distance from the shore, and the cargoes have to be conveyed in boats, either for loading or for discharging. At the moment that I am writing these pages, the name of the king of this place is Caelobotras (Keralaputra). Another port, and a much more convenient one, is that which lies in the territory of the people called Neacyndi, Barace byname. Here king Pandian used to reign, dwelling at a considerable distance from the mart in the interior, at a city known as Modera (Madura). The district from which pepper is carried down to Barace in both boats hollowed out of a single tree, is known as Cottonara.⁵²

In this account of Pliny we get the names of certain leading places, such as Nitrias, Muziris, Kuttanad, Madura, Barace, Nelcynda etc. which are called today with little difference. Nitiras is a town situated on the Netravati river in South Canara, which could be today's Mangalore. Barace is called by Ptolemy as Bakare, the present day Puthudadu, which is ten miles south of Alleppy. Cottonara is the Hellenized form of the Indian name Kuttanad. In former times this name was applied even to the places east of the present Kuttanad, which produced large amount of pepper.⁵³ The author of Periplus who had been to Muziris in 77 A.D., in which year Pliny published his book, says 'Muziris, of the same kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia and by the Greeks (Periplus 54). In another place he writes

'Muziris and Nelynda are now of leading importance' (Periplus 53). For Periplus, Nitrias, which is near to Mangalore today, is the place where there is the problem of the pirates and not Muziris or Nelcynda, as is given by Pliny. Cosmos writes about Kerala in the sixth century as 'Male where pepper grows'; is a dictum even now in use in Germany.

Regarding the return journey Pliny writes: Travellers set sail from India on their return to Europe, at the beginning of the Egyptian month of Tybis, which is our December, or at all events before the sixth day of the Egyptian month Mechir, the same as our Ides of January; if they do this they can go and return in the same year. They set sail from India with a south-east wind, and upon entering the Red Sea, catch the south-west or south.⁵⁴

2.5. India, land of pepper

Periplus is of the opinion that Muziris and Barace (Purakad) were the chief ports of the time from which a great quantity of pepper, the chief product of Malabar was sent to Europe. Other export items according to him are fine pearls, ivory, silk cloth, spikenard from the Ganges, malabathrum from the interior, transparent stones of all kinds, diamonds, sapphires, and tortoise – shells. He adds 'and for this reason they send large ships to these market-places'.⁵⁵ Cosmos writes in the 6th century about India as the land of pepper as 'Male where the pepper grows'.⁵⁶ The word he uses is Male; which is

⁵² Pliny 6.23

⁵³ Periplus 56, quoted in H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (Longman 1912) 44.

⁵⁴ Pliny 6.23

⁵⁵ Periplus 56, as quoted in H. W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (Longmans 1912) 44.

⁵⁶ Cosmos, *Christian Topography*, book 3, as quoted in perumalil p. 39.

the southern part of India. He then writes about the five marts or cities where one gets them. They are the then important cities of Kerala like Muziris, Pudukad, Niranam etc.

Due to these contacts the European trade with India flourished. Pepper was in great demand in Rome. Pliny writes about this pepper trade of the first century A.D. According to him: It is quite surprising that the use of pepper has come so much into fashion, seeing that in other substances which we use, it is sometimes their sweetness, and sometimes their appearance that has attracted our notice; whereas pepper has nothing in it that can plead as a recommendation to either fruit or berry, its only desirable quality being in certain pungency; and yet it is for this that we import it all the way from India. Who was the first to make trial of it as an article of food? And who, I wonder, was the man that was not content to prepare himself by hunger only for the satisfying of a greedy appetite.⁵⁷ The continued use of pepper in cooking raised its price to 15 denarii a pound for long pepper, 7 for the white and 4 for the black pepper.⁵⁸

2.6. Flow of Roman coins to the Indian cities

This vigorous trade in pepper and other spices of India began to drain the Roman empire of its wealth. Pliny writes about the

same as follows: The subject of (setting forth the whole route from Egypt to India) is one well worthy of our notice seeing that in no year does India drain our empire of less than five hundred and fifty millions of sesterces, giving back her own wares in exchange, which are sold among us at fully one hundred times their prime cost.⁵⁹ He writes in another place: At the very lowest computation, India, the Seres, and the Arabian peninsula drain from our empire yearly one hundred million sesterces; so dearly do we pay our luxury and our women.⁶⁰ He writes again: Both pepper and ginger grow wild in their respective countries and yet here we buy them by weight like gold and silver.⁶¹ The author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean sea* also remarks: there are imported here (the Malabar ports), in the first place, a great quantity of coins.⁶²

This Indo-Roman contact resulted in the flow of money from Rome into the ports of India. The great number of Roman coins discovered in different parts of India including South attests to this fact. The greatest number of coins discovered was of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. Then comes those of Domitian, Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian. Very few are found of Vespasian and Titus.⁶³ Many authors are of the opinion that the active trade was not only with the South. It extended from the southern tip of India to the mouth of

⁵⁷ Pliny 12.7

⁵⁸ J.W. McCrindle., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (Calcutta 1877) 121-122.

⁵⁹ Pliny 6.23

⁶⁰ Pliny 12. 18

⁶¹ Pliny 1. 7

⁶² *Periplus* 56, quoted in H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Lomgmans 1912) 220.

⁶³ H.W. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Lomgmans 1912) 44

Indus in the North and the countries inland. The most important port in the north was Barygaza (Broach). It was the rival of Muziris.

Periplus writes that the trade was not only with the coastal towns but also with the inland towns. This trade contact increased steadily from the time of Augustus till the extravagant time of Nero, whose coins are more seen in India. Then there was a decrease till its rise during the time of Hadrian whose coins too are found in great numbers. Claudius Ptolemy wrote his *Geography* during this time from information collected from traders who were in India for a long time.⁶⁴ Commerce was carried on both by land and sea. The land route from North India reached Ctesiphon via Persia. Pliny describes this route in his *Geography* 5.24. Most of the sea-borne trade that came up the Red Sea found its way to Alexandria by way of Berenice, Coptos and the Nile. Pliny and Periplus do not write about the further Roman contacts with India. But the coins of Septimus Severus (193-211), Geta (11-12) and Caracalla (212-217) found in India speak about the same. Barygaza became a less important to the Romans after the first century A.D. Muziris, on the other hand, became important to them. Quoting the *Peutinger Tables*, Rawlinson writes about the presence of a temple of Augustus in Muziris in the early third century.⁶⁵ Muziris is

mentioned by St. Ambrose in his *De Moribus Brahmanorum* as *totius Indiae citra Gangem emporium* (only important city on this part of the Ganges).⁶⁶ This is evident from the amount of coins found in Madura both of Arcadius (395-408), emperor of the East and of Honorius (395-423), emperor of the West. Gibbon in his 'Rise and fall of the Roman Empire' writes that among the ransom demanded by Alaric was 3000 pounds of pepper.⁶⁷ The sack of Rome by Alaric, the Gothic king in 410 A.D. and the subsequent political changes in Rome resulted in the decrease in the demand for Indian articles. But in the 6th century the situation changed and the sea-borne trade with India revived. This is clear from the writings of Cosmos Indicopleustes, who visited India and Sri Lanka in 520 A.D.⁶⁸ The incidents narrated by Cosmos about the discussion between the Persian and Roman emperor, at the court of the Ceylon king at the time of Cosmos' visit to Ceylon shows that the Romans were still frequenting the ports of India (McE 160). This is again evident from the discovery of coins of Theodosius (408-450), Marcian (450-457), Leo (457-474), Zeno (474-491), Anastasius (491-518) and Justin (518-521) from India. There is thus every indication that the trade between Rome and India continued until the capture of Alexandria in 641 A.D. by

⁶⁴ Ptolemy 1.17.

⁶⁵ H.G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge 1926) 121.

⁶⁶ Ambrose, *De Moribus Brahmanorum*, PL 17.11.33.

⁶⁷ H.G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge 1926) 102.

⁶⁸ Cosmos, *Christian Topography* 11, PG 88. 445)

Muslims.⁶⁹ During the early Christian centuries philosophers and traders frequented the towns of India. They were: Apollonius of Tyana, Metrodorus, Meropius, Frumentius, Edesius, Museus bishop of Doleni and Theodore who visited India in the 6th century who gave notices on India to St. Gregory of Tours.⁷⁰ Thus the Greek contact followed by the Romans which started in the sixth century B. C. continued till the sixth century A.D.

Conclusion

We should therefore say that India was indeed a known land to the writers and traders

of ancient times. It was for them not merely a land like other known lands of that time, but a world of wealth, knowledge and specialties. That is the reason why all writers of ancient times have got at least something to write about India, and often more. This knowledge about India in the west and in the Mediterranean world helped St. Thomas the apostle of Jesus Christ to go to that known country, where there was also Jewish presence. The gospel of Christ he preached was well received by a small number of people, high class and wealthy, who later was known as St. Thomas Christians of India who today forms strong and vibrant Church.



⁶⁹ A.C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India* (Patna 1971) 34.

⁷⁰ See the details in Jerome, *Epistola ad Paulinum* PL 22. 541; Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.19; Ambrose, *De Moribus Brahmanorum* PL 17. 1133 and Gregory of Tours PL 71. 733.

The Organised System of Christian initiation From 4th to 6th centuries

John Moolan

Introduction

An overall vision of the Christian initiation rite during the fourth to sixth centuries in different places, except for the East Syrian tradition, seemingly provides the details of a well-organised system of administering together the sacraments of baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist throughout Christendom. The East Syrians (Chaldeans, Syro-Malabarites, Assyrians) during this period followed up the most

ancient apostolic tradition of the order of initiation as chrismation-baptism (Acts 2:37-42; 10:44-48; 1 Jn 5:8) with Eucharist as the right of the baptised on *agape* days (Acts 20:7).¹ For them it is in the seventh century, patriarch Isho-Yahb III (647-650/57) who introduced first the infant initiation with baptism-chrismation-Eucharist in accordance with the order of baptism of Jesus in Jordan (Mt 3:16) where the indwelling of the Spirit took place when He came out of the water.² Hence, the East Syrian tradition is excluded in this study.

¹ The East Syrian evidences in this regard are: (a) The Acts of Thomas in India (3rd century) contain five accounts of conversions made by the Apostle: 1. Gundaphorus and his brother (chs.25-27), 2. A woman possessed by devil (chs.49-50), 3. Mygdonia (ch.121), 4. Sifur/Siphor (chs.132-133), 5. Vizan/Vazan/Luzanes and certain women (ch.156-158). They provide the details of the initiations process as anointing, baptism, and Eucharist. For the French and English translations of these chapters, see Varghese B., *Le onctions baptismales dans la tradition Syrienne*, CSCO 512, Tomus 82 (Louvain, 1989) 3-33; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (London, 2003) 16-21. (b) Aphrahat (d. after 345), though none of his demonstrations is devoted to the administration of Christian initiation, makes ample references for the initiation processes as anointing, baptism, and Eucharist in his *Demonstrations on prayer* 4.5, 19; *On the sons of the covenant* 6.14; and *On the paschal feast* 11.10. (c) Ephrem (306-373), though he wrote no treaty on Christian initiation as such, indicates seemingly the order of initiation as anointing, baptism, and eucharist while he deals with teachings on this subject through his *Hymns on Virginity* 4.9, 11; 7.6-9; *on Epiphany* 3.1-5, 13-14, 16; 5.1-2; 5.5-6; 8.5-6, 9, 21; *on the Faith* 10.17; *Commentary on the Diatessaron* 4.2; and *Homily on Our Lord* 2. (d) Narsai (399-502) gives a detailed structure of the initiation rite as anointing, baptism, and Eucharist in his *Homily 21: On the Mysteries of the Church*; and *Homily 22: On Bbaptism*.

² Mookan G & Paul K.A. (trans.), "The Order of Holy Baptism by Mar Eshoo Yavh Catholicos of Kh'dayav and afterwards Elaborated by Mar Elia Catholicos Patriarch", in *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari Together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism* (Trichur, 1967) 117-173; G.Diettrich, *Die nestorianische Tauf liturgie* (Giessen, 1903); T.S.Garret, "Baptism in the Church of South India", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 1(1955) 385-391; E.R.Hambye, "Le Batême dans l'Eglises Syrienne

All other traditions during this period, though performed differently in different places with different interpretations, the common features are rather the same. The concerned selected documents, mainly of the fourth century due to their special impact on the Church after the freedom movement, provide ample evidence in this regard. As a result, when we set in order all the elements of initiation rite from the fourth to sixth centuries, we get a systematised administration of the sacraments of initiation rich in symbolism and theology, which is the basis for the initiation rite in use today in every Church.

I. Documents

The following documental evidences bring to light the earnestness of different Churches in various places for introducing the process of initiation with very many rituals as public worship making use of the freedom from persecution in the fourth century. The initiation rites in Egypt, Jerusalem, Caesaria, Syria, Constantinople, Cappadocia, Milan, Asia Minor, North Africa, Rome, and Antioch

are found in the following set of written information.

1. Serapion (339-363)

Serapion the bishop of Thmuis (Egypt), a friend of Athanasius of Alexandria (328-373), deals with the fourth century Egyptian rite of initiation in his *Euchologion*, a collection of thirty prayers known also as *Pryer Book* or *Sacramentary*.³ The chapters 19-25 of this work containing seven prayers on baptism deal with the Egyptian way of Christian initiation.

2. Cyril of Jerusalem (350-387)

Cyril in his *Procatecheses* (PG 33, 331-366), eighteen *Pre-baptismal Catecheses* (PG 33, 369-1060), and five *Mystagogical Catecheses* (PG 33, 1065-1128), gives the details of initiation rite in Jerusalem.⁴

3. Basil the Great (d.379)

Basil the bishop of Caesaria known as great organizer, defender of faith, true interpreter of values, liturgical reformer, second Athanasius, and the Father of oriental monasticism was great among the

de l'Inde", *L'Orient Syrien* 1 (1956) 255-266; W. de Vries, "Zur Liturgie der Erwachsenentaufe bei den Nestorianen", *ocp* 9 (1943) 460-473; F.Chirayath, *Taufliturgie des Syro-Malabarischen Ritus*, Das Östliche Christentum 32 (Würzburg, 1981).

³ M.E.Johnson, *The Prayers of Serapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis* (Rome, 1995) 127-143; Id., "The Baptismal Rite and Anaphora in the Prayers of Serapion of Thmuis: An Assessment of a Recent 'Judicious Reassessment,'" *Worship* 73 (1999) 140-168; P.Rodopoulos, "The Sacramentary of Serapion," *Theologia* 28 (1957) 252-275, 420-439, 578-91; 29 (1958) 45-54, 208-217; R.J.S.Barrett-Leonard, *The Sacramentary of Serapion of Thmuis: A Text for Students, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Liturgical Study 25 (Bramcote/Nottingham, 1933); B.Spinks, "Serapion of Thmuis and Baptismal Practices in Early Christian Egypt: The Need for a Judicial Assessment," *Worship* (1998) 255-270; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed., M.E.Johnson (Collegeville/Minnesota, 2003), 124-127; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the first five Centuries* (Cambridge, 2009) 460-465.

⁴ PG 33; L.P.McCauley, *The Works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem*, 2 vols., Fathers of the Church 61, 64 (Washington, 1969, 1970); F.L.Cross, ed., *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments; The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses* (London, 1966); R.Paulin, *S. Cyrille de Jérusalem catéchète* (Paris, 1959);

Cappadocian Fathers. His *Homilies on Baptism*, *Holy Spirit*, and several of his *Letters* addressed to various dignitaries deal with the theological and ceremonial significance of Christian initiation.⁵

4. Apostolic Constitutions (ca.381)

It is an anonymous document of the Church orders probably from western Syria, though Asia Minor or Constantinople also suggested. Three principal accounts of this document, (a) Book 3, chapters 16-18 based on *Didascalia*, (b) Book 7, chapter 1-28 a rewriting of *Didache*, and (c) Book 7, chapters

39-45 an elaboration of *Apostolic Constitution*, provide the details of initiation rite of this period.⁶

5. Egeria/Etheria (381-384)

Egeria a pious woman, probably a nun or a wealthy ascetic, from Spain in her travelogue known as *Itinerarium Egeriae* (Egeria's Travel) gives the liturgical practices found in the holy places of Jerusalem during 381-384. Her report on the processes of Christian initiation explained in chapters 45-47 is almost similar to that of Cyril, but with some discrepancies.⁷

A.A.Stephenson, *Works of St.Cyril of Jerusalem*, Vol. 2, Fathers of the Church 64 (Washington, 1970); S.Marquardt, *Cyrillus Hierosolimitanus, baptismi, chrismatis, eucharistiae mysteriourm interpretes* (Leipzig, 1882); E.Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – Fourth Century Baptismal Homilies* (Edinburgh, 1994), 67-97; E.H.Gifford, *The Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Vol.7 (Grand Rapids/Michigan, 1894) 1-5: Prologue to catechesis; 6-143: Prebaptismal catechesis; 144 -157: On the mysteries to the baptised; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 473-487.

⁵ PG 13, 423-446, 1511-1630; U.Neri, *Basilio di Cesarea, Il battesimo : Testo, traduzione, introduzione e commento* (Brescia, 1994) 31-53; For the translation of *Homily On the Holy Spirit* and the *Letters*, see B.Jackson, *Les Treatise de Spiritu Sancto: The Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters of Saint Basil the Great*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, Vol.8 (Grand Rapids/Michigan, 1894) 1-50, 109-327; J.Ducatillon, *Basile de Césarée, sur le baptême*, SC 357 (Paris, 1989) 46-56; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 582-591; 618-620.

⁶ For the concerned English translation, see E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 35-40. For the whole document and various studies on it, see M.Metzger, *Les constitutions apostolique*, 3 vols., SC 320, 329, 336 (Paris, 1985, 1986, 1987); B.Varghese, *Le onctions baptismales dans la tradition Syrienne*, 105-112; W.J.Grisbrooke, *The Liturgical Portions of the Apostolic Constitutions: A Text for Students*, Liturgical Study 13-14 (Bramcote/Nottingham, 1990); F.X.Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutions apostolorum* I-II (Paderborn, 1905); E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 564-573; A.H.B.Logan, "Post-Baptismal Chrismation in Syria: The Evidence of Ignatius, the Didache, and the Apostolic Constitutions," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998) 92-108; Saxer V., *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne du II^e au VI^e Siècle* : Esquisse historique et signification d'après leur principaux témoins (Spoleto, 1988) 221-232.

⁷ *Égerie, Journal de voyage*, ed., H.Petre, SC 21 (Paris, 1947); *Égerie, Journal de Voyage (Itinéraire)*, eds., P.Marvel, M.C.Diaz Y Diaz, SC 296 (Paris, 1982); J.Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (London, 1971); M.E.Johnson, "Reconciling Cyril and Egeria on the Catechetical Process in Fourth-Century Jerusalem," in P.Bradshaw, ed., *Essays in Early Eastern Initiation*, Liturgical Study 8 (Bramcote/Nottingham, 1988) 18-30; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 33-35.

6. Gregory of Nazianzus (d.390)

Gregory the bishop of Nazianzus in Cappadocia, a friend and follower of Basil the Great, in his two sermons delivered probably in between 379-381: (a) *Oration 39 on the Holy Lights*, a sermon on the baptism of Christ preached on January 5, and (b) *Oration 40 on Holy Baptism*, preached on the following day, elaborate the Christian initiation with a theological exposition.⁸

7. Gregory of Nyssa (d.ca.395)

Gregory the bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, brother of Basil the Great, deals with Christian initiation in his three homilies

known as, (a) *Catechetical Oration* 33-36, 38-40, (b) *Sermon On the Day of Lights* or *On the Baptism of Christ*, and (c) *Sermon Against Those Who Defer Baptism*.⁹

8. Ambrose (+397)

Ambrose, a late convert to Christianity in 347 just before his bishop of Milan, delivered two sets of instructions probably around 390: (a) *On the Mysteries* and (b) *On the Sacraments*, deal with the Christian initiation in Milan.¹⁰

9. Theodore of Mopsuestia (392-428)

Theodore delivered sixteen *Catechetical Homilies* in two sets: (a) Ten discourses on the

⁸ PG 36, 359-430; C.G.Browne, J.E.Swallow, *Gregory of Nazianzen: Select Orations*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, Vol.7 (Grand Rapids/Michigan, 1894) 352-359, 360-377; C.Moreschini, P.Gallay, *Grégoire de Nazianze Discours 38-41*, SC 358 (Paris, 1990); G.Winkler, "Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu und de Ursprung de Epiphaniestes: Eine Untersuchung griechischer, syrischer, armenischer und lateinischer Quellen," *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994) 221-222; J.Mossay, *Les fêtes de Noël et d'Épiphanie d'après les sources littéraires Cppaddociennes du iv siècle* (Louvain, 1965) 31-65; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 592-602, 620-621.

⁹ PG 46, 315-325, 415-432, 578-600; R.J.Kees, *Die Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes in der Oratio Catechetica Gregors von Nyssa* (Leiden, 1995); S.Taranto, "Il Cristo e I sacramenti in Gregorio di Nissa: Il Battesimo," in M.Girardi, M.Marin, eds., *Origine e l'Alessandrinismo Cappadoce III-IV secolo* (Bari, 2002) 171-201; J.Daniélou, "Chrismation prébaptismale et divinité del'Esprit chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Recherches de Science Religiuse* 56 (1968) 177-198; W.Moore, H.A.Wilson, *On the Holy Spirit*, NPNF, series 2, Vol.5 (Grand Rapids/Michigan, 1892) 315-325, 518-524; E.Ferguson, "The Doctrine of Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratio Catechetica*," in S.E.Poter, A.R.Cross, eds., *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical, and Theological Studies* (London, 2002) 224-234; Id., "Preaching at Epiphany: Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom on Baptism and the Church," *Church History* 66 (1997) 1-17; Id., *Baptism in the Early Church*, 603-616, 621-622.

¹⁰ *De mysteriis* I ; PL 16, 405-426; *De sacramentis* II; SC 16, 435-482 ; B.Botte, *Ambroise de Milan, Des sacraments, Des mystères, Explication du symbole*, SC 25bis (Paris, 1961) ; J.Schmitz, *Gottesdienst im altchristlichen Mailand. Eine liturgiewissenschaftliche Untersuchung über Initiation und Messfeier während des Jahres zur Zeit des Bischofs Ambrosius +397* (Köln-Bonn, 1975); Id., *Ambrosius: De Sacramentis, de Mysteriis; Über die Sacramente, über die Mysterien*, Fontes Christiani 3 (Freiburg, 1990); Saxer V., *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 341-348; T.Thompson, *St. Ambrose: 'On the Mysteries' and the Treatise 'On the Sacraments' by an Unknown Author* (London, 1919); L.L.Mitchell, "Ambrosian Baptismal Rite," in L.L.Mitchell, *Worship: Initiation and the Churches* (Washington, 1991) 75-89; E.J.Yarnold, "The Ceremonies of Initiation in 'De Sacramentis' and 'De

Nicene Creed, and (b) Six discourses containing one homily on the Lord's Prayer, three homilies on baptism, and two homilies on Eucharist, of which the second set deals with the Christian initiation in the Patriarchate of Antioch.¹¹

10. John Chrysostom (398-407)

John Chrysostom of Constantinople, known as the "Golden Tongue" due to his rhetoric golden eloquence both in style and content of his homilies, delivered twelve *Catechetical Instructions* on Christian initiation in Antioch probably in two different years of 388 and 390 while he was a presbyter there in between 386-398. They have come down to us in two series of manuscripts translated and studied by various authors.¹²

11. *Testamentum Domini* (4/5 c.)

The *Testament of the Lord* belonging to the fourth or the fifth century from Syria/Asia Minor, seemingly dependent on the Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* of the third century, provides in its book 2 a detailed liturgy for baptism almost similar to the baptismal rites of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 381) and the Theodore of Mopsuestia (392-428).¹³

12. Augustine (d.430)

Augustine, a late convert to Christianity at the age of thirty-two in 387, was ordained presbyter in 391 and became the bishop of Hippo, North Africa, in 396. His **sermons** – *Ad Neophytos* (PL 40, 1209-1214), *De Baptismo* (PL 43, 107-214), *De Unico Baptismo* (PL 43, 595-614), *De Gratia Christi e De Peccato Originalis* (PL 44, 359-410), *De Paschate* (PL 46,

Mysteriis' of St. Ambrose," in *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970) 453-463; E. Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 98-149; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 634-647.

¹¹ A. Mingana, ed., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed; on the Lord's Prayer, and on the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist*, Woodbrook Studies, Vols. 5, 6 (Cambridge 1932, 1933); E. Yarnold., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 165-250; R. Tonneau, R. Devreesse, eds., *Les Homélies Catéchétiques de Mopsuestia*, Studi e Testi 145 (Vatican City, 1949); H. Lietzmann, *Die Liturgie des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Berlin, 1933); E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 47-50; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 518-532.

¹² *Catechesis* I, PG 49, 223-231; *Catechesis* II, PG 49, 231-240; A. Wenger, *Jean Chrysostome: Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, SC 50, 50bis (Paris, 1957, 1970); A. Piédagnal, *Jean Chrysostome: Trois catéchèses baptismales*, SC 366 (Paris, 1990); P. W. Hakens, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, 1963); E. Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 150-164; T. M. Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 15 (Washington, 1967); D. Sartori, "Il mistero del battesimo nelle catechesi di S. Giovanni Crisostomo," *Lateranum* 50 (1984) 358-395; E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 40-47; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 533-563, 622-623.

¹³ G. Sperry-White, *Testamentum Domini: A Text for Student, with Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Bramcote/Nottingham, 1991); I. Rahmani, *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi* (Olms, 1968); V. Saxer, *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 232-240; E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 579-581.

828-841) – and *Confessions* give evidence for the North African administration of Christian initiation rite.¹⁴

13. Proclus (d.485)

Proclus, the bishop of Constantinople from 434 to 446, in his *Homily* 27, the only catechetical discourse on baptism from the Church of Constantinople, explains the ceremonies of Christian initiation in a dialogue form between the preacher and the catechumens.¹⁵

14. John the Deacon (6 c.)

He was a deacon in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Symmachus (498-514). In his response to various questions on different aspects of Roman baptismal practices, he gives an overall vision of the

catechumenal and initiation process at Rome about 500.¹⁶

15. Severus (d.538)

Severus, the bishop of Antioch from 512 to 518, among his twenty-five cathedral homilies, six of them known as catechetical homilies (21, 42, 70, 90, 109, 123) to catechumens, deal with the sixth century initiation rite in Antioch.¹⁷

16. *Gelasian Sacramentary* (8 c.)

Though this document is of the 8th century, it reflects the initiation rite of the 6th century as a direct continuation of the fourth and fifth century usage in Rome. The manuscript *Vatican Reginensis* 316 edited and published under the title *The Gelasian Sacramentary* by H.A Wilson in Oxford 1894

¹⁴ *Confessions* 1.11.17-18; 2.3.6; 4.4.8; 6.13.23; 8.2.3-5; 9.3.5-6; 9.8.17; 9.10.22; 9.13.34 explain his own experience of baptism, see H.Chadwick, *Saint Augustine Confessions*, World's Classics (Oxford, 1991); W.Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, 1995); R. De Latte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême: Étude liturgico-historique du rituel baptismal des adultes chez Saint Augustin," *Questions Liturgiques* 56 (1975) 177-223; V.Grossi, *La catechesi battesimale agli inizi del v secolo: Le fonti agostiniane* (Rome, 1993); Id., *La liturgia battesimale in S. Agostino: Studio sulla catechesi del peccato originale negli anni 393-412* (Rome, 1970); Id., "Baptismus," in E.Mayer et al., *Augustinus Lexikon*, Vol. I (Basel, 1990) 583-591; B.Busch, "De initiatione Christiana secundum sanctum Augustinum," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938) 159-178, 385-483; S.Poque, *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermon pour la Pâque*, sc 116 (Paris, 1966); E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 142-149; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 776-815; V.Saxer, *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 381-399.

¹⁵ J.H.Barkhuizen, "Proclus of Constantinople, Homily 27," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 14 (2003) 1-20; V.Saxer, *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 333-340; J.Leroy, *L'homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople: Tradition manuscrite, inédits, études connexes*, Studi e Testi 247 (Vatican City, 1967) 184-194; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 748-752.

¹⁶ *Ad senarium*; PL 50, 399-408; A.Wilmart, *Un florilège carolingien sur le symbolisme des cérémonies du baptême avec un appendice sur la lettre de Jean Diacre* (Rome, 1933) 153-179; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 208-212.

¹⁷ M.Briere, ed., *Homélies cathédrales de Sévère d'Antioche*, PO 8, 23, 25, 36-38 (Paris, 1919-1977); E.W.Brooks, *The Hymns of Severus and others*, PO 6 (Paris, 1911) 3-179; A.Baumstark, "Karwoche und Osternacht im Kirchengesang des Severus von Antiochien," *Caecilienvereinsorgan* 46 (1911) 63-66; F.Graffin, "La catéchèse de Sévère d'Antioche," *L'Orient Syrien* 5 (1960) 47-54; V.Saxer, *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 465-488.

is a Roman-Gallican hybrid document, which includes Gallican elements in sections 66-76, while the rite in sections 26-44 is certainly Roman.¹⁸

II. General Structure and Theology

When we put together all the available evidence in order, the following structure with its symbolical and theological significance manifest the great care and attention given for the Christian initiation by the concerned Churches to deepen the practical aspect of the Christ oriented life. During this period, though granted also the infant baptism,¹⁹ adult initiation was the normal practice. The whole process within two or three years may generally be divided into four stages with certain periods of intervals: 1. Admission (acceptance) at the beginning of the specified years, 2. Catechumenate (catechesis) and

enrolment (election) within the specified years, 3. Enlightenment and purification during the period of Great Fast (Lent) in the final year, and 4. Initiation (mystagogy) during the Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday night. The elaborate structural and theological developments of these four stages in different places may be put together as follows.²⁰

First Stage

Admission (Acceptance)

This is the first step of acceptance of the candidate into the community of catechumens who desire to become Christians. The ceremony takes place in the beginning of the period of Great Fast (Lent) before the specified years of preparation. This includes the rites of enquiry, signing, salting of the tongue, laying on of hand, and exorcism.²¹

¹⁸ L.C.Mohlberg, ed., *Liber sacramentorum Romanae ecclesiae ordinis anni circuli*, *Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta IV* (Rome, 1960); A.Chavasse, *Le sacramentaire gélisien* (Vat. Reg. 316): *Sacramentaire presbytéral en usage dans les titres romains au VII^e siècle* (Tourin, 1958); Id., "Les deux rituels romains et gaulois de l'admission au catéchuménat que renferme le sacramentaire gélisien (Vat. Reg. 316)," in Id., *Etudes de Critique et d'Histoire Religieuse* (Lyon, 1948) 79-98; P.De Puniet, "Les trois homélies catéchétiques du sacramentaire gélisien," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 6 (1905) 304-315; B.D.Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism* (Aldershot, 2006) 111-114; V.Saxer, *Les Rites de L'Initiation Chrétienne*, 597-624; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 212-243; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 768.

¹⁹ J.Jeremias, *Infant baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London, 1960) 94-95; but K.Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (London, 1963) disagrees with Jeremias' certain views on the matter.

²⁰ For a comprehensive study of the fourth-sixth century origins of the ritual ceremonies of Christian initiation, see E.Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 1-54; E.J.Yarnold, "The Fourth and Fifth Centuries," in C.Jones, G. Wainwright, E.Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (London, 1979) 95-110; J.D.C.Fisher, E.J.Yarnold, "The West from about A.D. 500 to the Reformation," in *The Study of Liturgy*, 110-117; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*; E.Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 455-816. The adult initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church follows the four stages as, 1. Entrance to the catechumenate, 2. Training and study, 3. Lord's Prayer and anointing, and 4. Baptism; see *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church: Infant Baptism and Chrismation, Adult Baptism and Chrismation, Holy Matrimony, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick* (Kakkanad, 2005) 57-118.

²¹ The main elements of Syro-Malabar adult initiation at this first stage are the enquiry, laying on of hand, renunciation of sin, acceptance of Christ, first anointing on the forehead, and handing the Gospel to the aspirant. See *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 58-69.

1. Enquiry

Two or three years of preparation for the initiation start with the scrutiny of candidates in the beginning of the period of Great Fast (Lent). They present themselves with their sponsors (godfathers for men and godmothers for women) before the bishop seated in the middle of the cathedral surrounded by presbyters. Bishop makes enquiry to the sponsors on the candidates. If satisfied, they are admitted to the catechumenate.

2. Signing on the Forehead

This signing symbolises such four things as, the seal of entry to the flock of the Good shepherd, bearing of the sign of Christ, protection of the cross, and inheritance of heavenly glory. Just as the slaves and soldiers in olden days were marked with their masters' or emperors' sign on their hands or foreheads to indicate to whom they owed their service, the Christians were signed on their foreheads, not on hands, to show their belongingness to Christ who watches His soldiers from above. This urged them to believe boldly in crucified Christ and to witness Him courageously to the world.²² Forehead, being the place where blushing takes place to reveal shame at certain occasions of embarrassment, becomes proud of Christ at this signing of cross on it.²³

3. Salting of the Tongue

This rite symbolises such three things as, healing by the physician of physicians, preservation in the rampart of salvation, and seasoning of mind with the wisdom of the word of God to intellectual maturity.²⁴ They receive it throughout the catechumenate as their substitute for the Eucharist to remit sins. Pre-Christian Romans used salt for the rite of casting out of demons.²⁵ The salting of the tongue was a part of the Latin baptismal rite until 1969, whereas the easterners never had it.

4. Laying on of Hand

This is the traditional sign (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6) of offering or setting apart of persons to God (Levi 1:4), e.g. Joshua (Num 27:23), Saul and Barnabas (Acts 13:3). However, in the early Church, this rite does not seem to be of this effect at this stage of admission, rather a sign of welcome to the catechumenate. This welcoming takes place today when the celebrant prays with his outstretched right hand over the candidates.

5. Exorcism

This symbolises the liberation from the slavery of Satan. Before entering the belief in God, the purification of heart, the dwelling place of God, takes place driving the devil

²² Ambrose, *De obitu Valentiniani*, PL 16, 1376-1377; H.Rondet, "La Croix sur le Front," *Recherches de ScienceReligieuse* 42 (1954) 388 ff. A sarcophagus of a Roman commander kept in Museo delle Terme, Rome, bears a cruciform seal on his forehead; see C.Jones, G.Wainwright, E.Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (London, 1979) 164a, plate 6.

²³ Augustine, *Sermon* 215.5; PL 38, 1072; *Sermon* 317.4.5; PL 38, 1437.

²⁴ C.Jones, G.Wainwright, E.Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy*, 96; John the Deacon, *Ad Senarium virum illustrem* 3; PL 59, 402.

²⁵ H.A.Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism* (London, 1985) 111.

out to remove everything opposed to God.²⁶ This ceremony includes the formula of bidding the Satan to go out and breathing on face to blow out the devil. Blowing on face was a conventional gesture of contempt, e.g. breathing on emperor's statue was a treason.²⁷ Hence, the abbot Anthony used to blow out devils when they appeared to him.²⁸ Among the Byzantines, after the renunciation of Satan, the candidates themselves blow on the devil to drive him out when the celebrant asks them to "blow upon him."²⁹

Second Stage

Catechumenate (Catechesis) and Enrolment (Election)

The admitted candidates are known as the catechumens (*katechoumenoi*) or hearers (*audientes* or *auditores*),³⁰ who are the persons under instruction for two or three years before their initiation. Sometimes, they delayed their baptism at least until the end of the passionate time of youth due to the possibility of committing sins at this age, and of the difficulties involved in severe punishments imposed on to grant absolution for the sins committed after baptism. Further, due to great respect for the holy mysteries of baptism, some would not like to receive baptism until

they felt completely ready for it, because the sacramental life involved such a radical change in life. For example, St. Ambrose, though from a Christian devout family, remained a catechumen until the people chose him to the bishop of Milan in 347.³¹ So too St. Augustine (d.430) remained un-baptised until the end of his sinful youth time.³² This stage includes catechumenate (instructions) on various subjects at the Eucharistic celebration of the catechumens during the specified years, and the enrolment as the worthy candidates before the beginning of the period of Great Fast (Lent) in the final year.³³

1. Catechumenate

This is a period of apprenticeship in Christian living introducing the catechumens to the preliminary knowledge of Christianity through catechesis on various subjects. They attend singing of Psalms, scripture lessons, and sermons at regular Christian Eucharistic assemblies. Scripture lessons on the topics most needed for the catechumens (hearers) are the themes of sermons or instructions. Seemingly, the basic themes are the Old Testament saving acts of the Lord as, the creation account, first sin, promise of the saviour, deluge, call of Abraham, patriarchal

²⁶ Pseudo Barnabas, *Epistle* 16.7.

²⁷ Augustine, *Op. imperf. Contra Jul.* 3.199; PL 45, 1333.

²⁸ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 40; PL 26, 901; see also Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 23.16; PL 1, 415.

²⁹ E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 111.

³⁰ Augustine, *Serm.* 132.1; PL 38, 734.

³¹ Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 7; PL 14, 29.

³² *Confessions* 1.11.17.

³³ The main elements of Syro-Malabar adult initiation at this second stage are the enquiry, prayer of liberation, intercessions, giving the Cross, and laying on of hand; see *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 69-79.

narratives on Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David, and crossing of the Red Sea.³⁴

The instruction follows the proclamation of intercessory prayers (*Karozuta*), laying on of hand, and dismissal of catechumens. Since the catechumens are dismissed before the Eucharist of the faithful, the first part of the Eucharistic unto dismissal was later came to be known as the Mass of the catechumens, and the following second part as the Mass of the faithful.³⁵

2. Enrolment

Enrolment takes place in the final year of formation at the beginning of the period of Great Fast (Lent) as an immediate preparation for baptism on the following Easter Sunday. Though the day of Pentecost also was considered for baptism, Easter Sunday was the usual day of baptism during the fourth century.³⁶

Preaching on the apostolic desperate response to Jesus, "Lord, we worked hard all the night long and caught nothing" (Lk 5:5), bishop asks for the names of the catechumens who wish to receive baptism on the following Easter Sunday. If not many come forward, he compares it to the apostles' unsuccessful

night fishing.³⁷ Those who wish to be initiated give their names to the presbyters who take note of it as their petitions for the initiation. Then onwards they are known as the applicants, the competent (*competentes*), or the chosen (*electi*) for the next stage of illumination.³⁸

On the first Sunday of the period of the Great Fast (Lent), the godparents (godfathers for men and godmothers for women) and catechists present their candidates one by one before the bishop seated in the middle of the cathedral surrounded by presbyters. Then, the bishop makes scrutiny with the sponsors on the character and behaviour of the candidates. If satisfied, based on the evidence of good conduct given by the sponsors, the community elects the candidates, and the bishop inscribes their names in the register.³⁹

Third Stage

Enlightenment and Purification

This stage starts at the beginning of the period of Great Fast (Lent) in the final year, and lasts throughout the season. Instructions on moral life, scriptures, creed, our father, and mysteries during this period help the candidates to illumine their minds and hearts to

³⁴ E.Ferguson, "Irenaeus's Proof of the Apostolic Preaching and Early Catechetical Instructions," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1989) 119-140; Id., "Catechesis and Initiation," in A.Kreider, ed., *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh, 2001) 229-268; W.Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, 1995); V.Grossi, *La Catechesi battesimale agli inizi del v secolo: Le fonti agostiniane* (Rome, 1993).

³⁵ *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.6; Ambrose, *Epistolarum*. 20.4; PL 16, 1037; Augustine, *Sermones* 49.8; PL 38, 324-325.

³⁶ Pope Ciracus (384-399), *Letter to Himerius* 2.3; PL 13, 1134; Tertullian, *De baptesimo*, 19; E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 10.

³⁷ Ambrose (+397), *In expos. even. Luc* 4.76; PL 15, 1634f.

³⁸ Augustine (d.430), *De fid. et op.* 6.9.; PL 40, 202; *Sermon*. 216.1; PL 38, 1077.

³⁹ E.C.Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 33.

understand better the Christian way of life. The forty days of fast, penance, and prayers during this period prepare them fit to fight against evil inclinations, and help them to keep their life pure and chaste.⁴⁰ Fasting includes not only the forgoing of food, but also abstinence from the legitimate use of marital union.⁴¹ In some places they forgo even the pleasure of bath until Holy Thursday on which all have to take bath to make themselves clean and worthy to appear before the Lord for the initiation on the Easter Sunday.⁴² Since the rites like exorcism, laying on of hand, daily Instructions on paschal mysteries, baptism, Eucharist, morals, creed, and Our Father at this stage are meant for the opening of the spiritual horizon to understand various acts of the economy of salvation (*Mddabranuta*), the candidates are known the 'Illuminandi' (destined for illumination).⁴³

1. Exorcism

Following the enrolment or election, the rite of exorcism takes place to liberate the candidates from the bondage of devil. Seemingly, at this stage, it is a part of almost daily meetings before they are sent out after the Eucharist of the catechumens.⁴⁴ The rite includes the following elements.⁴⁵

a. Keeping Disposition

To begin the ceremony, the candidates keep the following disposition before the exorcist. They in silence with outstretched hands and lowered eyes in an attitude of prayer stand bare-feet on sackcloth of goat's hair. Sackcloth, the traditional sign of penitence and repentance, and goat's hair, the tunic of Adam and Eve after the fall, remind them of the slavery to the devil due to the original sin. The standing on it indicates the wish to be counted among the sheep rather than the goats at the final judgement.

b. Preparation

One of the ministers removes the candidates' outer garments and breathes on their faces to fill them with a purifying fear. The half nakedness at this point reminds them of their once servitude to the devil's power, and the breathing on face alerts them to renounce laziness in following up of Christ.

c. Laying on of Hand

Bishop laying his right hand on the candidates recites the prayer of exorcism for driving the devil away from them. Then

⁴⁰ Tertullian, *De baptismo* 20; E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 11; Ambrose, *De Elia et ieiunio* 21.79; PL 14, 726.

⁴¹ Augustne, *De fid. et op.* 6.8 ; PL 40, 202.

⁴² Hippolytus, *Ap. Trad.* 20, instructs this washing as hygienic, and Augustin, *Ep.* 54.7.10; PL 33, 204 suggests the purpose of it as, the removal of dirt accumulated on bodies due to Lenten observances, so that they shall not be stinking at the baptismal font.

⁴³ The main elements of Syro-Malabar adult initiation at this third stage are the enquiry, intercessions, laying on of hand, and the second anointing on the forehead; see *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 80-90.

⁴⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 1.5; Egeria, *Peregrinatio* 46.1; Hippolytus, *Ap. Trad.* 20.3.

⁴⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 1.12; H.M. Riley, *Christian Initiation*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 17 (Washington, 1974) 31-32; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 10.14-16; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procat.* 9; Augustine, *Sermon* 216.10-11; PL 38, 1082.

onwards exorcism takes place at almost daily gatherings.

2. Daily Instruction

During this stage, the candidates attend the almost daily instructions given in such three levels as, the first, second, and third parts of the period of the Great Fast (Lent).⁴⁶

a. First Part

During the first two or four weeks, the instructions contain the themes of paschal mysteries, baptism, Eucharist, and moral questions.

b. Second Part

In Rome, it starts on the third Sunday, while in Jerusalem on the fifth Sunday. The themes of instructions were the creed and Our Father. Until then they were prohibited even from the listening to the recitation of these prayers before the person becomes competent for it. This custom of withholding certain matters was known as *Disciplina arcani* ("rule of secrecy" by which the un-baptised were not told about the mysteries of initiation) applied according to the command of the Lord that not to give dogs what is holy, and

not to throw pearls before swine (Mt 7:6). This practice with a pedagogical purpose increased the desire to know about the hidden secrecy on the concerned matters.⁴⁷ The creed and Our Father⁴⁸ are taught in such three stages as, handing over, explanation, and learning by heart.

(1) Handing Over

For the handing over, the bishop or the catechist recites clearly in loud voice the creed and Our Father to the better hearing of the candidates. The candidates listen closely to the recitation and try to memorise in order to keep them at their disposal, but the reciting or the writing down of them is not permitted at this stage, since it shall betray the secret.

(2) Explanation

Bishop or the catechist explains in detail the whole prayers phrase by phrase to the candidates to deepen their knowledge of faith in the divine protection of the heavenly Father.

(3) Giving Back

For the giving back, the candidates following the catechist recite the prayers phrase by phrase and repeat them by heart back to

⁴⁶ For the details of this instructions, see Ambrose sermons, *De Elia et ieiunio*; PL 14, 697ff; *De Abraham*; PL 14, 419ff; *Explanatio symboli*; SC 25bis; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 1-18; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies* 1-11; Augustin, *Sermons* 56-59, 212-216; PL 38, 377ff, 10558ff; *Égerie, Journal de Voyage (Itinéraire)*, eds., P.Marvel, M.C.DiazY Diaz, SC 296 (Paris, 1982), *Journal de voyage* 46-47; SC 296, 307-317.

⁴⁷ Augustin, *In Joannis Evangelium* 96.3; PL 35, 1875; *Enerratio in Psalmum* 48.3; PL 36, 544-546; *Enerratio in Psalmum* 80.8; PL 37, 1037; E.Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 55-59.

⁴⁸ In Jrusalem and Milan, the Lord's Prayer 'Our Father' was taught only after baptism; see Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 5.11-18; Ambros, *De sacramentis* 5.18-30; 6.24.

the catechist getting ready to recite them at any time they want.

c. Third Part

In the beginning of the holy week, the bishop makes a further scrutiny or enquiry on the candidates. The unholy and unpractised are sent out. The selected ones have to recite by heart the creed and Our Father before the bishop. Throughout the holy week, the bishop himself exorcises them, and instructs on the holy mysteries going to take place during the initiation rite. Everyday after morning prayer there will be a procession to the baptismal font. The processional hymns arouse great expectations on baptism among the candidates. All have to keep fast and vigil on Good Friday and Holy Saturday in the church.

Fourth Stage

Initiation/Mystagogy

The initiation takes place at the Holy Saturday night within the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist of the catechumens starts before the midnight. After scriptural lessons, homily, and the dismissal of catechumens (the non-baptised), all those who are prepared for baptism are taken in procession to the baptistery where the initiation takes place. By the time when all return to the church after the initiation processes to continue the Eucharist of the faithful, it will be already the Easter Sunday after midnight. Following are the baptismal, chrismatic, and

eucharistic rites conducted with manifold ceremonies during this night.⁴⁹

1. The *Effeta* (Be opened)

This rite known only in the West takes place outside the baptistery when the procession reaches at it. Imitating Jesus' touching the mouth and ears of the deaf and dumb man with saliva saying in Hebrew, "*Effeta* – be opened" (Mk 7:34), bishop touches the candidates' ears and nostrils uttering 'be opened' (*effeta*). This rite prepares the candidates for a proper understanding of the symbolic meaning of the following manifold initiation rites that are going to take place. The ears are empowered with God's grace to a careful attention of the following rites for attaining true Christian faith (Rom 10:17), and the nostrils are enabled to enjoy the life giving Spirit for becoming the fragrance of Christ to others (Job 27:3; Cant 1:3; 2 Cor 2:15).⁵⁰ Then, the candidates enter the baptistery for the following rites of the sacraments of initiation.

2. Oil Consecration

Bishop consecrates two types of oil, the oil of exorcism or catechumens and the oil of thanksgiving or chrism. Just as the Eucharist represents the real presence of Christ, so also the chrism (consecrated oil) represents the real presence of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Syrians used to keep a portion of the oil of thanksgiving near to the baptismal font in the

⁴⁹ The main elements of the Syro-Malabar adult initiation at this fourth stage are the baptism, third anointing on the forehead (chrismation), and eucharist; see *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 91-118.

⁵⁰ Hippolytus, *Ap. Trad.* 20.28; Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 1.2; 3.1ff; John Deacon, *Ad Senarium* 4; PL 59, 402; *Galesian Sacramentary* 41; E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 209-210, 229-230

baptistery. At each consecration, they add a portion of this reserved oil to the new oil in order to keep up the traditional apostolic continuity. The Thomas Christians in Malabar used to express great respect to this oil kept in the baptistery. Therefore, whenever they enter the church, after giving reverence to the cross and altar, they always used to bow their heads towards baptistery also.

3. Renunciation

This is the final exorcism on the candidates before baptism, symbolising the putting away of the old man.⁵¹ In order to indicate the former captive slavery to Satan, the candidates facing the west⁵² stand barefeet on sackcloth, remove outer garments, and stretch out hands to God in an attitude of prayer. Then all kneel down signifying the ancient fall (Gen 3:23-24; Acts 26:14) and the present adoration to Christ, the saviour (Heb 2:10). Though the Occidentals never turn to

the west for the renunciation, their turning to the east to look at Christ face to face approves apparently the west as the place to renounce devil 'on his face'.⁵³ Each one renounces Satan proclaiming, "I renounce Satan, all his works, all his services, all his angels, and all his pomps."⁵⁴ They then blow away (breath on) the devil and spit on his face.⁵⁵ The occidentals use the interrogative formula of renunciation.

4. Declaration

The renunciation follows an immediate declaration of Christ professing faith in Him as the sole leader and saviour of life. Turning to the east,⁵⁶ they declare their adhesion and allegiance to Christ proclaiming either addressing directly to Christ, "I enter into your service O Christ" or professing faith in the Holy Trinity, "I believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in one baptism of repentance."⁵⁷ The West uses the interrogative formula of acceptance.

⁵¹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 1.2-8; Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 5-8; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 2. 18-22; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.2-11.

⁵² West being the place of sunset to the entry of night symbolizes darkness (Satan). Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 1.2., PG 33, 1069 A; A.Raes, *Introductio liturgiam Orientalem* (Rome 1962) 130-131; R.H.Connolly & H.W.Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy* (London 1913) 12; J.Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (London 1960) 27.

⁵³ Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2.7; J.M.Hanssens, *La liturgia d'Hippolyte*, OCA 15 (Rome, 1959) 459-460; M.Righetti, *Storia liturgica*, Vol. 4 (Milan, 1964) 86.

⁵⁴ Ambrose, *Hexameron* 1.14 ; PL 14, 129.

⁵⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 2.5; PG 3, 420; Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2.7; B.Botte, *Ambroise de Milan : Des sacrements, des mystères, explication du symbole*, SC 25bis (Paris, 1961) 27.

⁵⁶ East is the place of Paradise (Gen 2:8) and the mother of luminaries. The glory of the Lord came from the east (Ez 43:2; 47:1), star in the east (Mt 2:2); second coming from the east (Mt 24:27); the ascension took place to the east of Jerusalem (*Apostolic Constitution* 2.57; Acts 1:11); R.H.connolly & H.W.Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy* (London, 1913), 12-13; L.W.Brown, *The Indian Christians of St.Thomas* (Cambridge 1956) 205; J.G.Davies, "Orientation", *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London, 1986) 421.

⁵⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 1.6, 9; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 11.25; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.12, 21.

5. Stripping

Following the acceptance of Christ, the candidates remove their cloths and become nude. In order to hide their nudity, the baptisteries had curtains around them.⁵⁸ The nudity resembles Adam's innocence in Paradise (Gen 2:25), and Christ's naked entry to and departure from the world (Col 2:15), which symbolises also the putting away of the old man (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9).⁵⁹ This manifests the significance of the avoidance of sin and the entry to the original innocence of purity. The stripping is necessary also for anointing the whole body before the baptismal bath.

6. Pre-baptismal Anointing

The bishop signs the candidates' foreheads with the oil of catechumens to seal or brand the sheep as the soldier of Christ.⁶⁰ The forehead as the highest and the noblest part of the body to which we direct our eyes while talking to somebody, the anointing here manifests the sign of dignity in facing the Lord (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 3:18) proclaiming openly allegiance to Him by scaring away the devil. Demons seeing the sealing on forehead make a long way off and fear to come close to harm, but declare war from afar. Therefore, as armour of body against all the weapons of demons, deacons or deaconesses⁶¹ anoint the whole body of men and women respectively, symbolising the strengthening of

an athlete to run a good race or the preparing of a warrior to make a good fight for the kingdom of God to conquer the enemy.

7. Water Consecration

Exorcism and epiclesis are the two elements of water consecration. Exorcism expels devil and the epiclesis induces Holy Spirit.

a. Exorcism

Bishop exorcises water either by breathing on it in the shape of Cross, or by tracing the sign of Cross on it or by dipping his hand Cross in it.⁶² This destroys the evil elements and vivifies the vital elements in water. The Old Testament parallelism of this rite is found in the water of deluge (Gen 8) and the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14). Just as the water of deluge destroyed the sinful people and saved the good ones, so the water of baptism destroys sin and saves life. Again, just as the water of Red Sea destroyed the evilness of Pharaoh and saved God's people, so the baptismal water destroys the evilness of Satan and saves God's children.

b. Epiclesis

This is done in anaphoral form. Asking God the Father to send His Holy Spirit to make Christ present in the water, bishop pours the oil of exorcism crosswise into the water. The Old Testament parallelism of this rite is

⁵⁸ H. Leclercq, "Baptistère", *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Vol.2 (Paris, 1908) 398-399.

⁵⁹ Ambrose, *Ps. 61 Enarr* 32; PL 14, 1180; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 2.2; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 11.28-29; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 3.8.

⁶⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.23; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 10.16.

⁶¹ M. Righetti, *Storia liturgica*, Vol. 4 (Milan, 1964) 106; *Didascalia Apostolorum* 16; E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* 14-15.

⁶² Yarnold E., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 107, note 30.

found in the power of the brooding of the Spirit over the primordial water that caused creation (Gen 1:2).

8. Baptism

The octagonal (eight sided) fonts, introduced first in 386 by Ambrose of Milan, symbolising the eighth day after seven days of creation, namely the resurrection day, were generally used for baptism. For the Orientals, the baptismal formula is in passive voice as, "N. is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" with thrice immersion and thrice "Amen" of the candidate at the invocation of each name of the Holy Trinity. This signifies that the bishop is only a mediator to convey the grace of the Holy Trinity conferred in sacraments. Whereas the Occidentals use the interrogative formula as, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" Answer, "Yes, I believe." This follows the first submersion, and then the second and third submersions using the same interrogative formula in the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

9. Post-baptismal Anointing (Chrismation)

This anointing with Muron or Chrism (the oil of thanksgiving), which makes the baptised the 'Christians' as the followers of Christ, the Anointed One, is the Messianic anointing of Christ that seals them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:21-22)⁶³

perfecting the rites of initiation with spiritual endowment. In the East, the anointing with chrism is the equivalent of the laying on of hand. Holy Muron is not merely an ointment, but Christ's grace with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Eucharistic bread and wine after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer just bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ, so also the charismatic oil after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer merely an ordinary ointment, but the power of the Holy Spirit with seven-fold gifts.

In the orient, the oil is applied on the forehead and other sense organs with symbolic meaning. Anointing on the forehead removes the shame inherited from Adam (Gen 4:15 God's mark on Cain), and unveils the face to see the glory of the Lord. Anointing on the ears enables to hear and grasp the divine mysteries (Mt 11:21). Anointing on the nostrils empowers to become the aroma of Christ to others (2 Cor 2:15). Anointing on the chest signifies the putting on of the breastplate of righteousness against the stratagem of Satan (Eph 6:11) as Christ after His baptism successfully fought against Satan (Mt 4:4, 7, 10). The sacrament of Chrismation as the spiritual reserve of the body and the salvation of the soul in the Church makes Christians the brothers of Christ (Heb 2:10-13) to continue the good works of the Lord here on earth.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ambrose, *Sermons* 3.8; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 3' 19; Yarnold E., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation* 38-38.

⁶⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 3. 3-7.

10. Washing of the Feet

Though this rite became obsolete later, Ambrose describes the washing of the feet of the baptised.⁶⁵ Several early baptisteries had a second, much smaller, font beside the main one,⁶⁶ perhaps either for the washing of the feet of the baptised or for the baptism of children. When the baptised come out of the water, the bishop assisted by the clergy washes their feet while Jn 13 (the washing of the feet of the apostles) is read out. The two purposes of this rite are, 1. To remind the candidates the importance of charity and humility in Christian life (Jn 13:14), because it was the lack of love and obedience to God, which caused the first sin in paradise, and 2. To protect against the tendency to sin inherited from Adam (Ge 3:15). Though Peter wished the washing of his hands and head, Jesus' stressed only on the washing of the feet for the one who has washed away all guilt in baptism (Jn 13:10). This indicates the need of special protection to the feet against the serpent still laying in ambush to trip the baptised again.⁶⁷

11. White Garment

Bishop gives the baptised the dazzling garments of pure white (Mt 13:43) as the symbol of the putting on of Christ (Is 61:10; Gal 3:27), and the godparents helps to wear

them. In the early Church, the white garment has manifold symbolisms as, the new man, salvation, resurrection, innocence, holiness, pure bride, and transfiguration. The emperor Constantine at his baptism draped even his throne in white.⁶⁸ In some places, white linen veils also were given as head-coverings for the neophytes marking the freedom of the children of God⁶⁹ and the symbol of priesthood.⁷⁰ They wear the garments throughout the Easter week, and on the octave of the Easter Sunday, the veils are removed from their heads symbolising the flying of infants from their nests to mingle with the faithful.⁷¹

12. Lighted Candle

Though this symbol is not quite common in the early Church at baptism, it is appropriate for the sacrament of baptism as "enlightenment" (Heb 6:4).⁷² Lighted candle signifies the enlightenment by Christ. The neophytes are the shining lights of the heavenly kingdom.⁷³ The candle symbolises the torchlight procession of the virgin souls with shining lights of faith to meet the bridegroom in the next world to come (Mt 25:1-13).⁷⁴

13. Re-entry to the Church

By the time when the initiation ends in the baptistery outside the church, it will be

⁶⁵ *Sermons* 3.4-7.

⁶⁶ J.G.Davies, *Architectural Setting of Baptism* (London, 1962) 54.

⁶⁷ Yarnold E., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation* 123, note 19.

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.62.

⁶⁹ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.19.

⁷⁰ John Deacon, *Ad Senarium* 6.

⁷¹ Augustine, *Sermon* 376.

⁷² Justin, 1 *Apology* 61; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 1.

⁷³ Ambrose, *De lapsu virginis* 5.19; PL 16, 372.

⁷⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.46; 45.2; PG 36, 425, 624.

already the resurrection Sunday after the Holy Saturday midnight. When the baptised with white robes and lighted candles enter solemnly the church, the congregation greet them with customary friendly kiss of peace, and they all celebrate the Eucharist of the faithful.

14. Eucharist of the Faithful

This part of the Eucharist contains the preparation of gifts, hand washing, prayer over the gifts, kiss of peace, Eucharistic prayer (*Anaphora*), and Holy Communion.

a. Preparation of Gifts

Besides the bread and the cup of wine mixed with water, other cup of water and another cup of mixed milk and honey also are brought as gifts in procession to the altar. The cup of water represents the “living water” (Jn 7:38) of baptismal purity for the inner washing of the soul, and the cup of milk and honey as baby food represents the Eucharistic promise of the sweetness of eternal life to the children of God in the promised land of heaven.⁷⁵ The procession signifies Jesus’ way of the Cross to Calvary, and the placing of gifts on the altar signifies the burial of the body of Christ.⁷⁶ The neophytes are not permitted to join this procession for eight days – the Jewish purification period of circumcision (Gen 17:12; Lk 2:21), before they become established Christians until the coming Sunday.⁷⁷

The wine mixed with water indicates two things: 1. Quenching of the spiritual thirst of the baptised with the life giving water from Christ, the real rock (I Cor 10:4; Jn 4:14), while the water from the rock quenched only the physical thirst of the people of Israel (Ex 17:1-6); 2. Purification of the side of Adam (groom), where from Eve (bride) the cause of sin was taken out, with the water (baptism) and blood (Eucharist) flew out (Jn 19:34) from the side of Christ (groom) as the source of grace to the Church (bride).⁷⁸

b. Hand Washing

Before the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer (*Anaphora*), the celebrant assisted by deacons washes and wipes his hands in imitation of Jewish ablution for a worthy approach to the altar (Ex 30:20; Ps 26:6; Jn 13:4). This means the necessity of the purity of heart for those who approach the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. Hands being the symbol of activities, washing them denote righteousness in words and deeds free from sins and transgressions.⁷⁹

c. Prayer over the Gifts

The celebrant prays over the gifts giving thanks to the Lord for the great favours done for the salvation of humanity through his passion, death, and resurrection. The prayer concludes thanking Christ for granting

⁷⁵ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 21.28, 29; John Deacon, *Ad Senarium* 12; Ambrose, *Sermons* 5.15; cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 1.14.3.

⁷⁶ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 4.25-29.

⁷⁷ Ambrose, *In Ps. 118 Expose.*, Prologue 2; PL 15, 1198-1199; cf. Clement of Rome, *First Epistle* 44.4.

⁷⁸ Jn 1:17; 19:34; Ambrose, *Sermons* 5.2-4.

⁷⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 5.2; G.Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1978) 124-125.

priesthood for a worthy celebration of the great mystery of ineffable gifts.⁸⁰

c. Kiss of peace

More than a customary friendly greeting in public, this is a reconciliatory gesture in accordance with Jesus' mandate to reconcile with others before making the offering at the altar (Mt 5:23-24). Hence, St. Paul calls it the "holy kiss" (1 Cor 16:20), and St. Peter names it the "kiss of love" (1 Pet 5:14). Each one giving the kiss of peace to the person next to him acknowledges the unity and harmony among the members of the Church as the single body of Christ the Lord. It foresees loving, supporting, helping, and sympathising one another according to the communal needs. Its placement in liturgy varies in different traditions. Justin gives it before the preparation of gifts, Cyril after the hands washing, Theodore between the preparation of gifts and the hand washing, and the Latin liturgy before Holy Communion.⁸¹

d. Eucharistic Prayer (*Anaphora*)

This central part of the Eucharistic celebration contains praise and thanksgiving for all good things of creation and the

economy of salvation on behalf of the humanity. Following the Jewish practice of synagogue blessing or praising and of saying grace or giving thanks before individual parts of their meal, the Church incorporates those elements in the Eucharistic prayer.⁸² The structural parts of the *anaphora* are the dialogue, preface, Sanctus, Eucharistic prayers, words of institution, commemorations, anamnesis, and epiclesis.⁸³ The celebrant pronounces the words of consecration over the bread and the cup of wine mixed with water, the words of vivification over the cup of water signifying inner cleansing by the "living water" (Jn 7:38), and the words of promise of eternal life over the cup of milk and honey symbolising entry to the promised land of heaven.⁸⁴ Three cups here correlate also to the three renunciations and immersions in baptism.⁸⁵

e. Communion

Eucharist as a meal is the mystery of the fraternal love in Christian life. The table companions unite in heart and mind while sharing the same food. That is why the early Christians called their Eucharistic celebration 'Agape' of love feast (1 Cor 11:20-22). The prayer of Jesus for unity manifests the call

⁸⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 4.31-32.

⁸¹ Justin, 1 *Apology* 65; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 5.2; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 4.39-41. For the diverse manner of the placement of the kiss of peace in different Churches, see G.Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1978) 105-110.

⁸² T.J.Talley, "From Berakah to Eucharistia," *Worship* 50 (1976) 115-137. The only Eucharistic prayer without consecration is the *anaphora* of Adai and Mari; see B.D.Spinks, *Addai and Mari – Anaphora of the Apostles*, Grove Liturgical Studies 24 (Bramcote Notts, 1980).

⁸³ For the West it comes before the words of institution, while for the East at the end of *anaphora*.

⁸⁴ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 23.2; Tertullian, *De res.carn.* 23; G.Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1978) 136.

⁸⁵ G.Kretschmar, *Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes*, *Leiturgia* V (Tübingen, 1964) 114.

for this love (Jn 7:11). The structural parts of the communion service are the Lord's Prayer,⁸⁶ fraction, mixing of body and blood, invitation to the Eucharist, communion, and thanksgiving.

At the communion service, the communicant placing the right palm on the left crosses them on the chest while approaching bishop to receive the Eucharist. At the extending of the crossed hands before the bishop, he places the body of Christ in the right palm of the recipient. The communicant consumes it devoutly after applying it on the senses of forehead, eyes, lips, and chest.⁸⁷ Then moving to the right the communicant drinks from the chalice held by priest. Other deacons distribute water as a sign of inner purification, and the mixed milk-honey as the sign of entry to the promised land of heaven. At the end, thanksgiving takes place for making worthy of redemption through such mysteries.⁸⁸

Conclusion

The administration of the sacraments of initiation during the fourth to sixth centuries manifests the earnestness of the Church to make her members serious in following Christ. A long period of preparation known as catechumenism in order to learn and

practice Christian faith before the initiation envisaged a thorough grasping of the gospel-based Christian principles of life for witnessing Christ. Theological significance of the mysteries of Christ celebrated during the initiation rite prompt them to remain united with Christ throughout life. Setting of different stages indicates the pilgrim character of the Church on earth moving towards heaven with much care and attention. Baptismal purification, chrismatic strengthening, and Eucharistic nourishment are the perennial needs to be renewed and revived in daily Christian life.

The purification processes through exorcism, fast, penance, abstinence, and charitable works help them to fight against the evil influences at any cost to retain the true character of the children of God. The sacrifices that they undergo during this period of formation, convinced them of the cost of discipleship that they have to undertake for witnessing Christ to others (Mt 10:38). Facing of sufferings and troubles as crosses to be carried in life, needs the power of Cross attained through becoming one with Christ in His sufferings. Therefore, the means of purification taught them well how to find joy in suffering to become the living martyrs of true Christian principles of Gospel values.

⁸⁶ The Our Father at this point of the celebration is seemingly introduced first by Cyril of Jerusalem; see G.Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1978) 130-131.

⁸⁷ Theodore, *Baptismal Homilies* 5.28, Cyril, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 5.21-22; Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 12: *On the Pasch*; PS 1, 528; Tertullian, *De idololatria* 7; R.H.Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai* (Cambridge, 1909) 29; A.Raes, "Attouchement des sens avec l'eucharistie," *L'Orient Syrien* 3 (1958) 488-489; F.J.Dölger, "Das Signen der Sinn emit der Eucharistie: Eine altchristliche Kommunionssitte," *Antike und Christentum* 3 (1932) 231-244.

⁸⁸ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 5.29; Cyril, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 5:22.

The whole system of the initiation rite is full of symbolism. Symbolical significance of the rite arouses theological and spiritual earnestness in Christian life. Death to sin and life in Christ through baptism, strengthening in the gifts of the Holy Spirit through chrismation, and the nourishment of the spiritual life with Eucharist makes them respectively the children of God, brothers of Christ, and the members of the Church to

follow up a holistic way of Christian life conducive to the mystical body of Christ. The integrity of these three sacraments in the initiation rite paves the way for the reception of the other sacraments of healing (reconciliation, anointing of the sick) and service (marriage, holy orders) for a graceful life towards the attainment of redemption of the world through the economy of salvation (*Mddabranuta*).



Eucharist – A Mystery Where God Touch Us Directly

George Therukattil MCBS

Introduction

In oriental theology, everything pertaining to understanding God is situated in the context of Mystery. Thus the Holy Qurbana or the Eucharist is also situated in the context of the Mystery – the Trinitarian mystery of God, which expresses a process of action wherein all the three persons are in reciprocal self-emptying and self-donating love. One can say Trinitarian Mystery is a mystery of the implosion of love of the three Persons that explodes into the Mystery of incarnation of the Son and continued in the mystery of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist is enacted the self-emptying of the Father into the Son in incarnation, the Son reciprocating it into the Father in the Paschal mystery of life, death and resurrection and the self-emptying of the Spirit of both in the outpouring of Holy Spirit in the Pentecost continued. Being the result of the Trinitarian

mystery's self-emptying and self-donation, the Mystery of the Holy Qurbana /Eucharist escapes all human comprehensibility. It can therefore only be experienced and lived. In this article I want to show that Eucharist is a mystery where God touches us directly so that we can experience it and live it.

Symbols

A symbol brings “knowledge of that which cannot be known otherwise”.¹ Symbol comes from *sym* + *balein* which means ‘to put together’, ‘to place side by side’ the elements of a whole, somewhat like the different pieces of a puzzle. But in contrast to the term puzzle, the term symbol connotes the idea of contract, a pact or covenant. In antiquity, when two or three persons make a contract they were given the pieces of an object, join it to the other pieces of, and thus prove their selves to be partners in the contract.² The function of

¹ Alexander Schmemmann, “Sacrament and Symbol,” in *For the Life of the World* (New York: Crestwood, SVSP, 2nd edition, 1973, p.141

² *Ibid*, p.14

symbol is to represent the real, to make it present under a new mode.³

Human beings cannot act, even exist, except in symbols, because they are inextricably spirits in matter, bound by space and time. We realize ourselves in corporeal gestures and symbolic signs. We have to use sign-symbols to reveal our inner selves.⁴ For example, to express ideas we use words, which basically are symbols. In the process of self-expression we take material things as symbols thereby transforming them. A 'pregnant alienation' takes place.⁵ We put our hearts in our hands when giving gifts, and the object is never again the same. It is transformed. When I buy a fountain pen from a shop and give it as a gift to my confrere, the pen suddenly acquires a greater beauty. It has become a sign of love. Material symbols are robbed of their physical individuality and become human sign-acts.⁶ They are trans-substantiated. A symbol points to a reality different from itself and makes it present without being identical with it. Symbols are 'super-charged' realities which make present what they symbolize. For example, a letter, a souvenir, or a gift acquire

deeper meaning and communicate the personal presence of the giver. In the sign-acts by which we express our personal life, there is a fundamental unity between the sign and the signified. The whole personal reality and one's whole attitude reach out to another in an expression of love, hate or other personal attitudes. This is also true of gestures. A gesture is a meaning made manifest in the body. We are where our gestures and intentions carry us, rather than where our bodies keep us.

Religious Symbols and its Role

Created by God and endowed with an infinite spirit, human life is a journey towards the Infinite; an existential tension and longing for the Absolute. And it is through religious symbols that human beings try to satisfy this longing, this hunger and quench this infinite thirst for this Absolute - God.

Religious symbols enable us to enter the depth of ourselves in our search of what is Ultimate. Invented by our creative spirit, they reveal the deepest aspects of reality and the hidden modalities of *being*, and have the power of transforming our minds and hearts and elevating them towards God.⁷

³ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, A Pueblo Book (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 72.

⁴ Piet Fransen, *Intelligent Theology*, London, 1967, p.117.

⁵ Joseph M. Power, *Eucharistic Theology*, London, 1967, p.85.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols, Studies in Religious Symbolism*, London, 1961, p.12

Sacrament

What does sacrament mean? Is it a mere symbol? In Rahner's theology symbol and sacrament are intertwined. "A real symbol is a symbol in which the reality of the symbolized really becomes present. The relationship between the symbol and the symbolized is dialectical: through the symbolic presence the reality of symbolized is really known."⁸ Thus for Rahner: "The sacraments are historical manifestations of the grace which is always and everywhere at work in the world."⁹ They are the symbolic carriers of God's grace. There is no pure natural; everything is in supernatural existential. It is 'graced reality', as reality is open to the transcendent from its very beginning. Thus sacraments are more than symbols. They are performative. In real though mysterious ways they make the reality symbolized present to us. This is so because the reality symbolized is somehow immanent in the sacramental symbol, though transcending it.

Role of Sacraments

Thus humans being open to and oriented towards the Infinite can touch or experience the mysteries through symbols, signs and imageries. In fact in Eastern tradition, sacraments are called Sacred Mysteries.

According to Orthodox thinking, God touches mankind through material means such as water, wine, bread, oil, incense, candles, altars, icons, etc. How God does this is a mystery. On a broad level, the mysteries are an affirmation of the goodness of created matter, and are an emphatic declaration of what that matter was originally created to be. Sacraments are symbols in the sacred sphere. In sacraments, it is generally believed, human being passes from the secular sphere to a sacred sphere where he/she experiences an encounter with God.¹⁰ Sacraments are according to Augustine, visible signs of invisible reality – inward grace brought about by the Holy Spirit. According to Karl Rahner, grace is the comprehensive radical opening up of a human being's total consciousness in the direction of the immediacy of God, as opening up that brought about by God's own self-communication. They are the means for us to be in touch with God. Eastern tradition in the early stages of it did not limit the sacraments to seven because, according to them, anything the Church did as Church was in some sense sacramental. But this tradition later on in contact with Western Tradition recognized 'seven major sacraments'. And Holy Eucharist which is known as Divine

⁸ William V. Dych, 'Karl Rahner's Theology of Eucharist' in *Philosophy and Theology* 11 (1988) p.130

⁹ Karl Rahner, "What is Sacrament?" in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 14, p.288

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event", in *Theological Investigations*, Vol.14 (New York: LDT, 1978), p. 162.

Liturgy in Eastern tradition is often considered as central and most important sacrament and is referred to as 'Sacrament of Sacraments'. All the other sacraments of the Church lead towards and flow from the Eucharist.

The Eucharist as Religious Symbol and Sacrament

Eucharist is the greatest Christian symbol because it is not only the symbol of Jesus' death but also of his resurrection. Symbols, as we said earlier can carry us into the mystical levels of awareness and to stress consciousness which are unknown to theology and the intellect. In the Eucharist we present ourselves to the symbol. We are present to a person who died for us. United with that person and with that agonizing, traumatic drama which he experienced, we are transformed and we cry out: It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. Such is the symbolism of the bread we interiorize by eating, in which with an ardent desire we receive the real body of the Lord. We are united not only with the individual Jesus but with the whole Christ, we are united with those departed, with the whole human family, with the Christ who is in the oppressed, with the Christ who cared for the sparrows and the lilies of the field, with the cosmic Christ, with the whole of nature. It is

in the above mentioned manner, that the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist under as the 'real presence'.

Eucharist as the supreme example of giving oneself. In this gift, Jesus puts his whole person into our hands. And as the giving of one's body is everything that a person can give, the Eucharist is the supreme manifestation of Jesus' love for us. This much we can say about the Eucharistic symbol. But the Eucharist is a sacrament, and sacraments are more than symbols. They are performative. In real through mysterious ways they make the reality symbolized present to us. This is so because the reality symbolized is somehow immanent in the sacramental symbol, though transcending it. It is not change of function or use, (not merely trans-signification) but change of substance (trans-substantiation). "The Eucharist is more real than the things we have to do with every day. Here is the genuine reality. This is the yardstick, the heart of things; here we encounter that reality against which we need to learn to measure every other reality."¹¹

According to Rahner, Eucharist is a real symbol. It is in and through the Eucharist as real symbol, and only in and through it, that the real presence of Jesus in his Paschal Mystery

¹¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God is Near Us: The Eucharist and Life* ed. By Stephan Otto Horn, San Francisco, Ignatius Press. 2003, p. 88

can become visible, audible and tangible to the community. This is also the reason why Rahner said that one can no longer maintain today that bread is a substance, as Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers of council of Trent. For Rahner, the substance of a thing did not include its *material and physical* reality, but the 'meaning and purpose' of the thing. Hence according to Rahner, transubstantiation means that, after the Consecration in the Latin Liturgy, the physical bread remained physical bread but it now had a new 'meaning' of spiritual food because it was now a 'symbol' of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Rahner does not deny or relegate the real presence of Jesus in the transformed Bread and wine, namely the Eucharist, rather he presents a new hermeneutics. Regarding the unique experience of real presence, he says: "He and his strength, He and his meaning, He and his interior light He and his daily forgiveness and interior sanctification – the person of Jesus, and these attributes of his together with him are bestowed upon him by God in the sacrament of the Eucharist."¹² More importantly, the bread and wine are not the sole sign of Christ. In fact, for Schillebeeckx, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was not the consecrated bread

and wine, but the presence of Christ in the '*assembled community*'. And thus the community of disciples is realized most intensely in the Eucharist. At Mass, there is nothing new on Christ's part; what is new is the Church's participation, what changes is the new hands reaching toward the cross both to receive forgiveness and to express thanks.

According to Rahner, "Through his enfleshment in concrete human history, Christ becomes the revelatory symbol in which God ... reveals the true nature of their triune divinity. They send their Spirit of love to the Church, which in turn becomes the symbol of Jesus' persistent presence in space and time, made visible and real in the sacraments in which the grace of God becomes historically manifest and becomes approachable."¹³

All these mean that Eucharist is the *sacrament* of the Mystery of the Trinity exploding into the Paschal Mystery. Eucharist is the *sacrament* of the Paschal Mystery re-enacted. This reminds us that the Paschal Mystery is larger than the Eucharist, even though the latter is its condition and its primary expression. This is why Vatican II said that "the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God,

¹² Id, "The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives" in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 7, p. 220

¹³ Geoffrey B. Kelly, ed. *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993, p. 289

in the Paschal Mystery”, and those who “seek God with a sincere heart and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will... may attain eternal salvation”.¹⁴

Eucharist as the Ursakrament

Eucharist is the Ursakrament or Grundsakrament; it is symbolic womb of all sacraments in the sense that the Eucharist makes the Church and Church makes the Eucharist and all the other sacraments. Body is a root symbol. As subject, the body bears within itself the consciousness of what it signifies. Our bodies are not just an indication of our existence. Our bodies are ourselves, though not fully because we are more than our bodies. Thus our bodies are sacramental symbols of us, of our existence. The surrender of one's body is the surrender of one's person. It is the supreme manifestation of love, for the one who gives his body or her body has nothing left to give. . Thus symbols and gestures make us transcend the narrow confines of our physical presence and of our body. A person who raises the hands to heaven opens himself or herself to God's gifts, grasping Him and, in a sense being grasped by Him.

Body is not merely the skeletal, organic animate object by which humans sense, think, move etc., but it is a set of systems by which human existence is possible. To say that the Word of God is at the mercy of the 'body' means that the saving encounter of God and humanity cannot be reduced to magic, that the Church's rites do not 'produce' grace in a mechanical way, that the very act of symbolizing both reveals and conceals aspects of God, the Church; and the humans ritualizing facilitates a genuine but limited encounter between human and the divine.¹⁵

Almost all of humanity's great cultures have held the body in contempt, regarding it as a kind of prison in which genuine humanity is trapped and seeing genuine humanity as something to be measured exclusively by intellectual values.¹⁶ But for Jews and Orientals and for Christians things are different. The New Testament writers while using Greek words, use them in the sense of their Hebrew equivalents. “Flesh”, for example does not mean the body as distinct from the soul, but the entire human being in his or her weakness, mortality, and temptation to sin.¹⁷ The objective body is the body perceived by

¹⁴ GS, no.22,25, cf. LG no 16

¹⁵ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Op. cit.* pp.70-80

¹⁶ Jose Comblin, *Being Human: A Christian Anthropology*, Burns and Oates, New York Orbis books, 1990, p.58

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.59

others. However, others cannot know exactly what makes my body my body.¹⁸ The real body is *my* body, not the objective body the scientists study. Through my body, I am present to the rest of the universe. I know that I am only apart of the universe, but my body makes me the center of that universe. It enables me to situate myself as, and feel myself to be, a centre of impressions, actions, and reactions. In a way, my body is a more element of the whole, as I regard the lower animals to be. But it is the human body that makes the subject that I am. "My "I" is not my consciousness, least of all a consciousness separated from my body. My "I" is my body. I am this body. My body, however, joins me with other human beings, since my body is a means of communication and a common life. My thought separates me from others. But my body unites me with others, and this by innumerable avenues."¹⁹

Body - Symbol for the Eucharist

The analysis of Body shows why Jesus made the symbol of the Body for the Eucharist. It also shows why the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God and its continuation in the Eucharist is the most radical Mystery. Philosophers of other cultures

could have imagined the presence of a God or a word of God in the human intellect – for example, in the form of an illumination or inspiration of the intellect. But they never suspected the greatest Mystery of all – God actually becoming a human being, entering into the human condition though a conception and birth, becoming the offspring of a genealogy reaching back to Adam. The son of God lived in a human body, a weak, mortal body. The second person of the Divine Trinity made no attempt to conceal the weaknesses of his body, or to be exempt from them. Indeed, here was a God willing to be nailed to a cross like a slave (Phil 2:7-8), that the bodily condition of God might be evident, this incarnate God performed manual labor. Through the signs he gave of his mission and dignity, he showed that all are related to the body. As if to show that his world was a world of bodies, he healed the sick.²⁰ He healed them to show that the Reign of God and the salvation of women and men in the concrete reality of the health of the body. For Christians, the terminus of the liberation process is the resurrection of the flesh.

Jesus' self-gift in the crucifixion and death, vividly depicted in the Eucharist through

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.70

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.71

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.61

words and actions, is the most powerful symbol of Christianity. Jesus created this dynamic symbol at a moment of deep emotional experience. He did it in the awareness of his impending death and at a moment of great uncertainty.²¹ The Eucharistic symbol was thus born out of Jesus' brokenness for others. He saw himself as broken bread. Because it came out of Jesus' emotional and even traumatic experience of self-sacrifice, the symbol has intense evocative power.

Already in his day Theodore of Mopsuestia (428 A.D.) spoke as follows: Christ did not say: "This is the symbol of my body, this is the symbol of my blood" but "This is my body, this is my blood". In so doing, he teaches us that [the bread and wine] are transformed into his body and blood. As Paul reminds us, the body is not destroyed, but 'transformed'. Our perishable nature must put on imperishability and this mortal nature must put on immortality. Such is the transubstantiation which converts a bit of *bread dust* into the Body of the Risen Christ.

Eucharist – A Mystery where God touches us

By sacramental communion of the body and the blood of Christ, he is in us, and

we are in him. Every time we gather for the Eucharist we enter into a communion with those present with us, those who are far off, and those who have gone before us in Christ, and those in heaven.. in the Eucharist years cardinal Josef Tomko, in his homily, said, "Ask who the Eucharist is, not what the Eucharist is." The Eucharist is above all an encounter with Jesus Christ. We are touching the person of Jesus as the woman who touched in the crowd did (Luke 5:42-48) when we reach out to receive the Lord in faith. Not only we touch Christ, but He touches us. He who eats me will live because of me (Jn 6:57), there is the mutual abiding "Abide in me, and I in you (Jn 15:4). Now God himself has taken flesh, has become a man among men, and has remained, so far remained that he places himself, in the mystery of transubstantiated bread, in our hands and in our hearts.²²

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man..." (Jn 6:53) At these words, Jews began to murmur. "...the controversy could easily have quieted by the assurance: Friends, do not be disturbed, this was only metaphorical language: the flesh only signifies food, it isn't actually that! – But there is nothing of that in the Gospel. Jesus renounces any such toning down; he just says with renewed emphasis that this bread has to be literally, physically eaten.

²¹ T.W. Guzier, *Jesus and the Eucharist*, N.Y., 1974, p.8

²² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Op. cit.* p.75

He says that faith in the God who became man is believing in a God with a body and that this faith is real and fulfilled; it brings full union only if it is itself corporeal, if it is a sacramental event in which corporeal Lord seizes hold of our bodily existence. In order to express fully the intensity and reality of this fusion, Paul compares what happens in Holy Communion with the physical union between man and woman. To help us understand the Eucharist, he refers to the words in the creation story: "The two [man and wife] shall become one (Gen 2:24). And he adds: "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit {that is, shares a single new existence in the Holy Spirit} with him (I Cor 6:17)"²³

Eucharist as a Memorial Symbol

Besides using this sign-act, Jesus could draw from the memories of the Passover. The setting of the celebration was the Passover, which was the celebration of two feasts, *pesah*, and *massoth* (Passover and Unleavened Bread). Both had acquired a further meaning – the memory of the event of the Exodus.²⁴ The meal did more than recall the Exodus. It re-lived it. The words used

"confer on the meal itself a power to evoke the past and hope for the future in such a way that those who ate relived in a real way the trials of the Exodus and came thence to live in the hope of the messianic promises."²⁵ Jesus thus used symbols sanctioned by history and tradition which had moved the people in the past. Only against such a background can we gauge the meaning and power of the action of Jesus in the Last Supper.

Jesus' body and blood given to the disciples was not simply a gift. By eating and drinking the disciples entered into communion with the sacrifice present before them in the person of Jesus.²⁶ The action of Jesus in the Last Supper gives the meaning of his passion and death, events which could otherwise appear as a mere historical tragedy. The body of Jesus was not slain but 'given for you'.²⁷ Thus the Eucharist proclaims the saving death! It is symbolic of the sacrifice Jesus makes of himself as he dies in order to live and give life. The Eucharist is thus an *anamnesis* of the Lord who died but is alive. And it evokes (by the Holy Spirit) a further reality: the participation in the life-giving death of the Lord by those who celebrate it. At the core

²³ *Ibid.*, p.77

²⁴ J. M. Powers, *Op.cit.* p.53

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.56

²⁶ *Ibid.* P.57.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.62

of the Eucharist we make an *anamnesis*: we relive the memory of Jesus and his unnatural death, the socio-political murder, consequence of his fighting against structural injustice. The Eucharist is therefore the celebration of Jesus' project of total liberation which ended up in his being put to death. In the Eucharist we celebrate the most radical liberative act of the man Jesus, his Passover, his passing on to life through death (the consequence of his stand in the cause for the downtrodden and their liberation, in confrontation with the religio-political authorities).

Experiencing and Living the Mystery of the Eucharist

Hence the Eucharist is not a symbol or sacrament of a *thing*, but of a liberative action. It is the summary of Jesus' life as a *being-for-others*. Jesus invested in the paschal meal, which commemorated the fundamental experience of the liberation from Egypt, his own action for the liberation of those in the slavery of sin and oppression. More than a *trans-substantiation*, the Eucharist is a *trans-eventualization*, since it is the event that was changed. Even at the ritual institution, it is actions and gestures, like the washing of the feet of the disciples, the blessing, the breaking and the sharing of the bread and wine that he told us to do in remembrance of Him. The breaking

of bread and the sharing of the cup would continue to tell his followers who he was for them, how his body was broken and blood poured out in sacrifice to save them all. "This is my body... Do it to keep alive my memory... It will be a challenge to you to realize what I have realized, to live and die for that which I have lived and will die for."²⁸ In the Eucharist the saving actions of Christ, especially his suffering, death and resurrection are *re-actualized*; not merely recollected. Under the veil of symbols there is present the salvific deed of Calvary in physical reality.

The Eucharist is thus the powerful symbol and sacrament pointing to the death of Jesus, who was crucified not between two candles but between two thieves, in Golgotha, where the outcasts lived, outside the gates of the city. We cannot celebrate Jesus' passing over from death to life meaningfully unless we are prepared to go through those prophetically charged actions of Jesus' giving of himself, body and blood, as a result of his fighting with the downtrodden for their total and integral freedom. At the core of the Eucharist there should therefore be a solemn pledge to be disciples of Jesus and to follow his lifestyle. Every Eucharist should be a continual renewal of our commitment to his ways and his cause. "Do this..." does not mean merely repeating

²⁸ Thomas Cullinan, *The Passion of Political Love*, London, 1987, p.103

ritually the Last Supper. It means daily living that life of Christ, which caused his passion and death.

The simple, central action of the Eucharist is the sharing of food: not merely eating, but sharing. This is a powerful symbol of what Jesus himself did. He did not wish the crowds to be dismissed without food (Mt. 14:15-21; 15:32-38). Jesus' power to feed the hungry world has been given to us in the Eucharist. His inspiring words call on us to share our resources, even if they be small, on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. "Every Eucharist made to serve as an excuse for evading this commandment ('give them something to eat yourself' Lk 9:13), in the face of heart-rending reality is not only vain but blasphemous."²⁹ No one may have more than what is needed. Both from the age-old spiritual point of view as well as by the political and economic yardstick, amassing a disproportionate wealth while depriving others of the necessities of life is a theft and a crime against society. The Eucharist is a contradiction to a life lived in corruption by enjoying a disproportionate share of the national wealth. "The dynamic meaning of the Eucharist as a new food-language for the

world can challenge each one of us to make crucial decisions to change our lifestyle and to imitate Jesus in initiating effective political and social action that will decisively affect the world and feed the hungry."³⁰

Our Eucharistic celebration therefore should be a celebration that deepens and re-roots our lives, our bodies, our energies, to give everything that we do not need to those who do not have. It is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist without living in communion with those who have nothing (I Cor 11:22). The Gospel of Mathew presents the Eucharist as the manifestation of God's merciful covenant. In it wounds are healed and bread is shared. The Eucharistic covenant is protest against those conditions that create suffering and keep people in poverty.³¹ Our Eucharistic celebrations should therefore be models of mercy, compassion, healing and resource sharing at every level, personal, inter-personal and infrastructural. They should stand as a countersign to the world's oppression, poverty and discrimination.³² "None of us can be in communion with him (Jesus) without being responsible for feeding the multitudes by sharing in their distress and putting what we possess at their disposition. Poverty, struggle

²⁹ George Casalis, *Op.cit.*p.170

³⁰ Joseph Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies*, N.Y., 1981, p.94

³¹ M.H. Crosby, *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, N.Y., 1981,p.147

³² *Ibid.*

and hope borne in common and lived in remembering and invoking the living Jesus together with the repast that concretizes this communion are the core and meaning of the original Eucharist and of the Eucharist that is really contemporary today. Apart from that, there can be any number of denuded or overblown liturgies harking back to traditional models or moving on to daring innovation, but all come to nothing. They are tombs, whether simple or ornate, for a dead Jesus.³³

The logic and structure of the moral imagination of Christians needs to be shaped by this sacrament. To get the vision revealed in the life, teaching and death of Jesus, we have to probe the depths of meaning contained in this prophetic symbol: the eternal movement of love. "Christianity ... is bread-sharing and cup-sharing. It is the body and blood of Jesus poured out for us in a way that radically changes the rules of the game... It is the bread and wine of the final Kingdom-banquet made present here and now, a Kingdom of justice and peace."³⁴

The perdurance of the presence is understood as a function of this relation. Perhaps it would be well to point out the ambiguity in our notion of presence. This notion attains its fullness, not when presence

is perceived as a local proximity, but when it is lived as a relation of knowledge and love. Take a young lover dreaming of his beloved as he rides the subway during the evening rush hour. He is absent from all those with whom he is present in the crush of the same car, but his heart keeps him present to her from whom he is absent. We have all attended meetings where we were 'physically present' while our hearts wandered a hundred miles off. Reserved host engulfed in the vastness of a Moslem city, or in the wilds of mission territory, is a presence only for the Christians, who venerate it as such. To them, it is not an object enclosed in a tabernacle, but a life they receive insofar as they enter into relationship with it.

Grace is discovering the reality through the sign, reading the Creator's name in his creation, and using the crutches along the way to find repose in God. In this manner, all creatures can receive a 'transignification' - not that some new signification or finalization is arbitrarily added to their fundamental meaning, but that their own ultimate significance and finality are thereby set in motion. Now, in this symbolic line, the Eucharist stands at the summit of creation; for, in the Eucharist, the signifier (the bread

³³ George Casalis, *Op.cit.* p.168

³⁴ Francis A Meehan, *A Contemporary Social Spirituality*, N.Y., 1982, p.33 (emphasis added)

given by God) is one with the signified (God giving the bread). It is the real presence of Christ at the heart of creation, its crowning by him who is 'the beginning' and who 'holds all things in unity' (Col 1:17-18) – not so much the risen Lord's presence in a piece of bread as that bread's belonging to the sphere of the risen Lord. Indeed, just as we cannot say that the world contains God – not even when Christ becomes incarnate in the womb of a virgin – but, rather, that the divine immensity

contains the world; and just as we cannot say that God's eternity is situated behind history – any more than before it – but that it encompasses time in its infinitude; so neither can we say that the bread 'contains' Christ, rather, that Christ assumes a little bread and wine in his divine person and then transfigures the sons of Adam who receive the bread into sons of God. Younger than the world the Eucharist places the world and us in God's eternity.



The fourth chapter is on the liturgical formation of the Marathi priests. Marathi missionaries on the liturgical formation and liturgical heritage which is key to the identity of the Spirit Church. This is fully in accordance with the teaching of Vatican II which points to the need of liturgical training. It is through the liturgy especially the divine Eucharistic

The second chapter describes the various factors of the Marathi Marathi. It notes that the evolution of people who became the first Christians were Christianized by the missionaries and many others like the liturgical formation through liturgical heritage.

Book Review

Thomas Mannooramparampil

GEORGE APPASSERRY, *Priestly Formation: Historical and Theological Reflections on Indian Perspective* (Satna, 2010) pp. 160, Paper. 120

The recent book of Fr. George Appassery on the traditional priestly formation of the Mar Thoma Christians till the 19th century is in fact the revised version of the doctoral dissertation defended by the author in the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Vadavathoor. I happened to be its second moderator. He has made an extensive research on this subject and gives valuable information on related subjects both in its body and in the foot notes.

The work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is on the origin and growth of Mar Thoma Margam. Apostle Thomas preached a Christian way of life. The particular life style resulting from his preaching is called Thoma Margam. Those who received faith from him developed it through the preaching of faith and sacraments and that is called Nasrani Thoma Margam. The author explains marga in general, different margas and Thoma Margam in particular.

The second chapter describes the various factors of the Thoma Margam. He notes that the majority of people who became the first Christians were Dravidian Buddhists. Jews, Buddhists and many other factors like the apostolic heritage, liturgy, theology, spirituality,

discipline, socio-cultural elements etc. helped the growth of the True Margam.

The third chapter is on the Education of Nasrani Kathanars (priests) in Thoma Margam. They followed the traditional Indian system of Gurukula /Madrasha. This system is called Malpanate or Ranbanate system. Malpan or Ranban was a holy, pious and learned priest, often unmarried and did parish work. The author explains the method of Malpan training and Malpan school. Ranban taught Syriac, liturgy, Holy Scripture, moral theology etc. and candidates got personal attention and training. With the arrival of foreign missionaries, Latin seminaries also for the Mar Thomas Christians started and Malpanate schools were suppressed in 1854. These seminaries run by foreign missionaries were highly instrumental for the latinisation the Mar Thoma Christians.

The fourth chapter is on the liturgical formation of the Nasrani priests...Malpans concentrated on the liturgical formation and Syriac heritage which is key to the identity of the Syriac Church. This is fully in accordance with the teaching of Vatican II which points to the need of liturgical training: "It is through the liturgy, especially the divine Eucharistic

Sacrifice, that 'the work of our redemption is exercised .Liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (Sc 2)." Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ and of His Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others" (SC 7). "Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed , at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (SC 10). It prescribes that the study of sacred liturgy is to be ranked among the compulsory and major courses in seminaries and religious houses of studies. (SC 16) and that clerics are to be given liturgical formation in their spiritual life."(SC 17). It is complained that the respective authorities, especially in the Syro-Malabar Church, neglect the teaching of the Council and even try to create disrespect and aversion to one's own liturgical heritage .This situation is to be changed. The author throws light on the urgent need of training in families and parishes and on the problem of enculturation and integration in the liturgical formation.

It is evident that we cannot restore the Malpanate system as such. At present very many subjects are taught in seminaries and therefore there is the need for very many well qualified professors and good libraries, which Malpanates cannot provide. Big seminaries with huge number of students find it difficult to impart personal training. They function as a whole just like secular colleges with strict study programmes and activities. Therefore an integration of the modern seminary system and Malpanate system is the solution. In inter-diocesan seminaries or common seminaries personal formation in imitation of Malpanates can be imparted in their own study houses under the guidance of respective diocesan or community authorities. The students can be sent to the common seminary for studies and classes.

The book contains a rich bibliography and glossary. I hope that this book will be read widely and will help to impart an integrated priestly formation reviving the positive elements of the Malpanate system.



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for his selfless service as the
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Christian Orient for a long period of time.*

We welcome

*Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vaniyapurackal
who replaces him as the section editor.*

